

Friday April 17 1998

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Argentina US\$ 2	Hong Kong HK\$ 25	Croatia R 100
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Austria S 1.30	India INR 15	Denmark D 500
Bahamas B\$ 2.00	Indonesia Rp 1,000	Portugal P 200
Bangladesh T 100	Italy L 2,000	Qatar Q 200
Belgium B 100	Japan Y 100	Romania R 100
Bolivia B 100	Kenya K 100	Saudi Arabia R 10
Brazil R 100	Latvia L 100	Senegal S 200
Canada C 1.00	Lebanon L 1,000	Sierra Leone S 100
Chad C 100	Lithuania L 100	South Africa R 10
Czechia C 20	Malaysia M 100	Spain P 200
Dominican Republic D 100	Mexico M 20	Sweden S 100
Egypt E 100	Norway N 100	Switzerland S 100
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The Guardian INTERNATIONAL

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Sport 198

Full coverage from Stamford Bridge of Chelsea's crucial tie against Vicenza

Incorporating today's television, radio and European weather

Decca Aitkenhead on:

The curfew town where the old fear the children

Comment, page 12

Death of a tyrant: A man alone, the blood of millions on his hands

One of the few journalists to see the body, Greg Torode reports from the Chong Sa-ngam Pass on the Thai-Cambodian border

LIKE an emissary from Hell, the Khmer Rouge spokesman yesterday emerged from the steaming jungle to proclaim that Satan was dead.

"Pol Pot has had a heart attack... I am happy," said Nuan Nuan, a senior cadre under new commander General Ta Mok, across the bamboo stakes and razor wire that ring their last stronghold.

"Now the bad images are gone, now there will not be the accusations any more." After winding his way down a jungle path from a Thai military base near the Cambodian border, our convoy was brought to a halt by bamboo stakes. We could see what appeared to be Khmer Rouge soldiers in the jungle across the clearing.

Moments later, a four-wheel drive vehicle roared up, a Khmer Rouge cadre got out and said just four journalists could go with him. A mad scramble ensued and then we were off through the jungle to see history.

A few hundred yards away down a dusty red path, Pol Pot lay in death like he spent so much of life — a man alone.

He was laid out on what appeared to be a new mattress in a humble plank hut, his head propped on a pink pillow, eyes and mouth ever so slightly open, giving life to a gaunt, yellowed face.

His nostrils were stuffed with cotton wool and a garland of red fuschias was wrapped around his deeply-watled neck.

An overpowering smell of formaldehyde filled the air. An empty water bottle and a fan were the only signs of any possessions. Under the bed, as if he had just stepped out of them, was a pair of rubber slippers.

Pol Pot would be cremated in three days' time, the cadres said. Outside, his second wife and young daughter sat grief-

stricken but not crying, avoiding contact. A few young Khmer Rouge soldiers wandered about, apparently curious but displaying no signs of mourning.

The air was completely still. The silence was only interrupted by the occasional mortar and artillery round from the surrounding hills that mark the border between northeast Thailand and Cambodia.

About two miles away in a similar small gathering of huts was Pol Pot's last safe-house. According to Mr Nuan, Pol Pot had returned to the two-storey dwelling with his wife and daughter on Wednesday afternoon after a normal day.

"Before he died he got a headache," he said. About 8pm he went upstairs to bed. His wife went up to see him about 11.15. She had forgotten to cover him in a mosquito net.

"She touched Pol Pot's body — he was cold and stiff."

When asked how they could be sure Pol Pot had died of a heart attack, Mr Nuan said simply: "Pol Pot has suffered heart trouble for many years."

It is thought that Thai military photographers were the first outsiders to view the corpse.

The commander of Thailand's Suranaree special task force, Wiwat Sakarak, insisted the body was really that of Pol Pot and that his hair had been dyed.

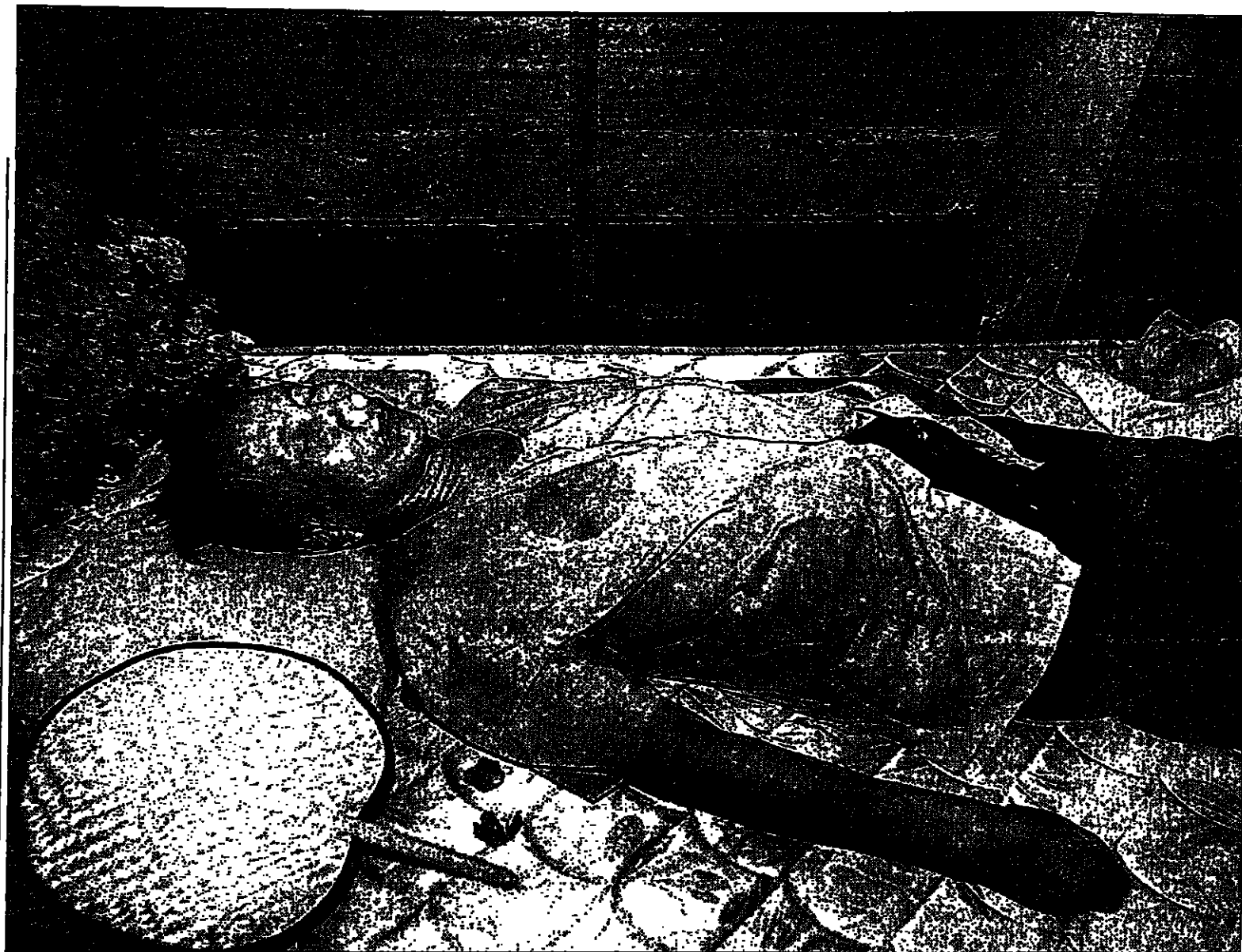
"If we take a good look at the roots of his hair, they are white," he said.

Khmer Rouge guerrilla officer Khem Noun said: "What I can tell you is that he was quite old and he dropped his life like a ripe fruit."

"They [the international community] were too late. They delayed things and now we are blamed for his death."

Pol Pot had realised for turn to page 3, column 7

Life that weighed 2m deaths, page 3; Leader comment, page 13; Obituary, page 14



Pol Pot's body lies in a hut near the Thai-Cambodian border yesterday. His hair is dyed and the room smells of formaldehyde. PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LONGSTREATH

"I'm disappointed. I think a lot of Cambodians are disappointed he was not punished"

Jimmy Carter, former US president

"He certainly died conveniently for the Khmer Rouge leadership if he died a natural death"

Henry Kissinger, former US secretary of state

"The sad thing is he was never brought before an international tribunal"

Sydney Schanberg, whose book spawned the film The Killing Fields

"The story doesn't end with Pol Pot, we have to try to bring his inner circle to trial"

Dith Pran, whose suffering is portrayed in The Killing Fields

"His deeds rank in the annals of history with Stalin and Hitler"

John Howard, Australian prime minister

"Pol Pot's legacy is a continuing cancer at the heart of Cambodia"

Amnesty International



Norman... banned from twirling on Tuesdays

Hoedown showdown as Norman changes to Norma

Cowboy boots out, high heels in for cross-dressing line dancer

Jennie Wilson

NORMAN Horton enjoyed his new hobby of line dancing so much that he decided to go twice a week — once as a man and once as a woman.

But now he has been forced to hang up his cowboy boots and stetson because one of his instructors took offence and banned him from dancing as

a man. "I think it is disgraceful. Who is he to sit in judgment?" Mr Horton said yesterday. "I had always gone to his class as a man anyway."

On Tuesday nights Mr Horton, aged 58, would set off for his line dancing classes at Darlington Arts Centre, Co Durham, in open-neck shirt, trousers and stetson. But on Wednesdays he transformed himself into Norma with a frilly blouse, short skirt, gold

tights and high heels. When word of Mr Horton's double life reached his Tuesday night instructor, Frank Howell, he was told not to come back. "He pulled me to one side after a lesson and told me in no uncertain terms what he thought of me. I have now been banned from going back to my Tuesday classes where I dress as a man. It is a bit odd because I am free to go to the Wednesday classes dressed as Norma."

Mr Horton took up line dancing last year in an effort to keep fit. He liked it so much that he decided to give

his transvestite alter ego Norma a night out. A former paratrooper and military policeman, he has been cross-dressing since the age of 12, but was "outed" by a reporter nine years ago. As a result he set up a self-help group for transvestites, their wives and families. "My wife doesn't mind me cross-dressing as long as I don't do it too often and keep it under control."

His wife, Mavis, aged 65 — who has been forced to give up dancing with a bad knee — said: "I can understand the man being a little shocked but

when you are in business you shouldn't let your feelings come into it. He was doing no-one any harm either as Norman or Norma and it's ludicrous that he can dance as a woman but not as a man."

Mr Horton has exacted a little revenge against Mr Howell. "I dressed up in full Norma gear including short skirt, stockings and high heels to show him what he was missing. I walked in just before the class began and handed him a letter. I wrote that he had no right to discriminate against me. He was absolutely gobsmacked."

Norma appears to be a better dancer than Norman anyway. During his line dancing career Norman was not even entered for a proficiency test, while flamboyant Norma has danced off with a bronze and silver medal and is hoping to take her gold in May.

"I'm just glad it was Norman who was kicked out and not Norma as I perform much better as a woman. I don't know why it is — I just feel less restricted and have a better balance in high heels than cowboy boots."

Mr Howell was not available for comment yesterday.



'Norma'... welcome to whirl on Wednesdays

Inside

Britain

World News

Finance

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Botha vents fury on his accusers

P.W. Botha yesterday: 'They want to destroy my image and through me to humiliate my people' PHOTOGRAPH: PETER ANDREWS

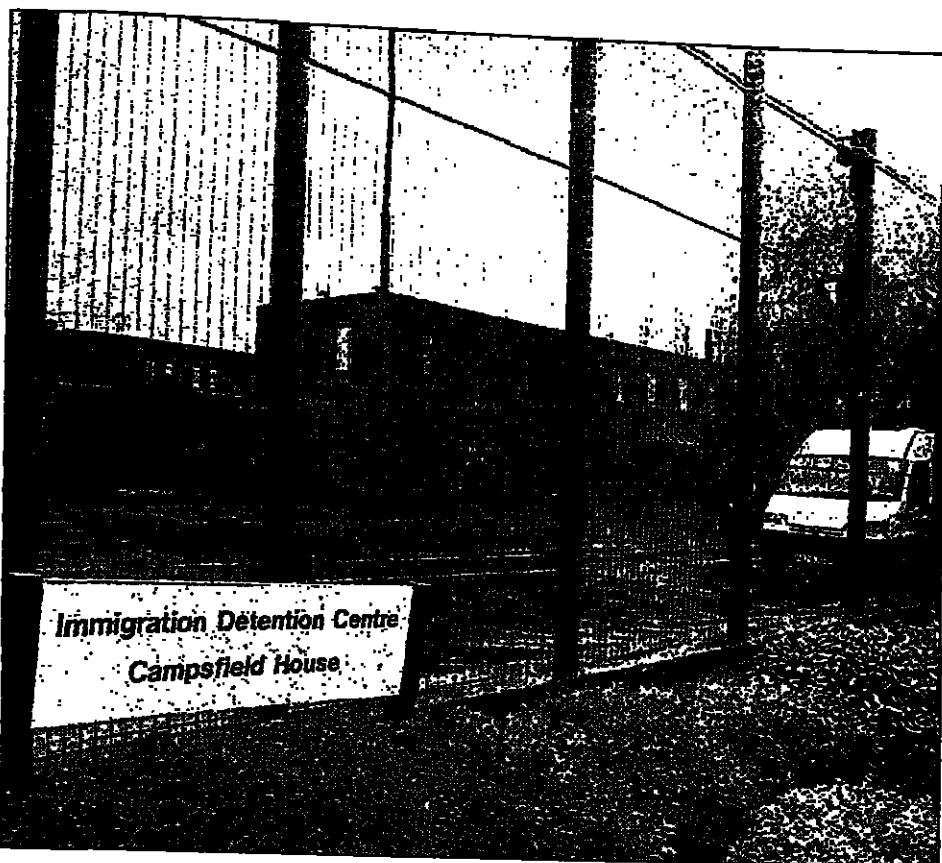
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Report offers strong criticism of Campsfield House • Minister announces changes, but congratulates security firm for 'good work'

Group 4 to keep asylum centre role



Immigration Detention Centre
Campsfield House



A detainee at Campsfield House (seen above left) looks out of the Oxfordshire centre, which has been strongly criticised PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEPHENS

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

GROUP 4 security is to run the riot-hit Campsfield House detention centre for asylum seekers for another three years, despite a critical official inspection report published yesterday.

The Home Office minister, Mike O'Brien, flanked by the directors of two private prison companies, congratulated Group 4 for doing a "good job in difficult circumstances" at the largest centre — Campsfield House in Oxfordshire — where there have been two riots in the last four years.

Mr O'Brien went on to confirm that the Government intends to build more private detention centres to increase substantially the number of asylum seekers and illegal entrants held in Britain. The centres are also to lose their

status as "secure hostels" and a new regime of sanctions and incentives introduced to control disruptive detainees. They are to be treated more like convicted prisoners.

The response came as the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham, published the official inquiry report, which warns that the 900-place detention system is overloaded and says only a fraction of those who should be detained were being held.

As a consequence, when the total number of available detention spaces is full, people who may be illegally in the United Kingdom, arbitrarily go free," said the report. "It is clear, too, that threat of detention is not an effective deterrent to those who seek to enter the country illegally."

Mr O'Brien, who attacked "high profile" pressure groups who had made "wild" allegations against Group 4, asserted that as many detention places would be built as

were needed to ensure that the policy was no longer applied arbitrarily.

The chief inspector's report endorses an expansion in the number of detention centres but specifically said it should be done to reduce greatly the proportion of the 400 detainees being held in prisons.

The Government's response disappointed human rights groups, refugee organisations, and local campaigners who have been calling for Campsfield's closure.

Amnesty International voiced concern that the minister had failed to act on the recommendation that judges and not immigration officers should decide who is held.

"Despite the Government's repeated claim that detention is used only as a last resort, many of these desperate people are locked up before their case is heard," said Amnesty's refugee officer, Jan Shaw.

Suke Wolton, of the Close Campsfield Campaign, a local pressure group, said: "The idea that we should increase the number of people detained when we are already breaking a human rights convention is an outrage."

But Mr O'Brien rejected

claims by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees that Britain's detention policy breached the European Convention on Human Rights. "We have looked at this carefully and we are absolutely sure we comply," Sir David said that the detention centres had been set up in the belief that detainees would be held no more than six weeks — but instead they were often held for more than a year. It meant the idea that they should be secure hostels with barred windows and high fences but few controls

over the people inside had been undermined.

"It is frankly unsound and unsafe to hold people within a secure perimeter without clear rules governing their behaviour, and without statutory duties and obligations being imposed on the staff who look after them. It is the lack of clear rules and sanctions which is at the heart of the problems facing contracted detention centre staff. Until they are established, the prospect of repeat disturbances at Campsfield House remains."

Key proposals

- Threat of detention is not an effective deterrent to illegal entrants.
- Judges, not immigration officers, must authorise detention, with reasons given in writing.
- Threat of renewed rioting at "unsafe" detention centres in absence of system of sanctions to control detainees' behaviour. The centres should no longer be seen as "secure hostels".
- "Pleasant but aimless atmosphere" at the biggest centre, Campsfield House, near Oxford. Group 4 doing "good job in difficult circumstances".
- Detention is regrettable necessity, but system is overloaded.

Funding reform attacked

There is no way to buy a gong, Dixons chief tells Neill inquiry

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

SIR Stanley Kalms, chairman of the retail chain Dixons, yesterday launched a bitter attack on any reform of party funding, warning that to be forced to limit or declare political donations was an interference with the "inviolable rights of all citizens."

The Conservative Party donor told Lord Neill's inquiry into party funding that he believed he had the right to give as much money and lobby whoever he liked without any invasion of privacy.

He also attacked the committee for even suggesting, in a discussion document, that because he was a party donor he should be ruled out from receiving political honours.

He accused the committee of seeking the "permanent branding of a citizen" and of suggesting he should be "denied recognition because of support for a political party". He defended the

honours system, insisting there was no evidence that peerages and knighthoods could be bought, and said he had found claims that he had been "going for a title" very offensive.

He said that "gongs, Ks or peerages" were in the main awarded to people who had made a significant contribution to public life. "There is no reason to change the system. You don't repair something that works well."

However, he disclosed that his own company, which used regularly to finance the Tories, has decided to end party donations altogether.

"Times move on," he said. "One has the feeling those days have gone, but it is a personal decision."

He put the blame on politicians for causing an atmosphere of political abuse by not being "robust enough" if they agreed to see businessmen.

He cited Tony Blair's involvement with a £1 million political donation from the



Sir Stanley Kalms: offensive found claims

Formula One motor racing chief, Bernie Ecclestone.

"This is an uncomfortable example. I would admit that prima facie there is a certain amount of discomfort about this example," he said.

The dispute over Mr Ecclestone also grew yesterday when a Labour MP warned Lord Neill at the hearing that it risked creating a "sleaze democracy" by compromising the integrity of his party.

Martin Linton, MP for Battersea and a former Guardian journalist, accused both the Labour and Conservative parties of an "unhealthy reliance" on wealthy donors to fund their activities.

He backed the case for more state funding and tax credits to improve the parties' finances. "The alternative is a sleaze democracy, where the parties are forced into an unhealthy reliance on funding from private individuals which will sooner or later compromise their integrity — for example, Bernie Ecclestone," he said.

He also referred to large payments made to the Tories, such as the donation from fugitive tycoon Asil Nadir before the collapse of his Polly Peck business empire.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life disclosed yesterday that Lord Neill's office had written to Mr Ecclestone again, suggesting that if he still wished to give evidence he was "very welcome to do so."

The secretariat has pointed out that there are free times at the beginning of next month for him to give evidence.

Hue and cry over asparagus rustlers

Mail Couper

LINCOLNSHIRE fields of asparagus have been placed under 24 hour surveillance by a supermarket chain this week, amid fears that modern day rustlers are on the prowl.

Tesco took the measure after last weekend's floods

devastated rival fields of the same crop.

The company fears that as the price soars — at present it is £1.99 for 10 spears — petty criminals will be drawn to easy pickings in its fields.

A spokesman for Tesco said: "It is causing concern to our suppliers, some of whom already suspect they

have been victims of rustlers."

He added: "We had to take these measures. An open field is such an easy target."

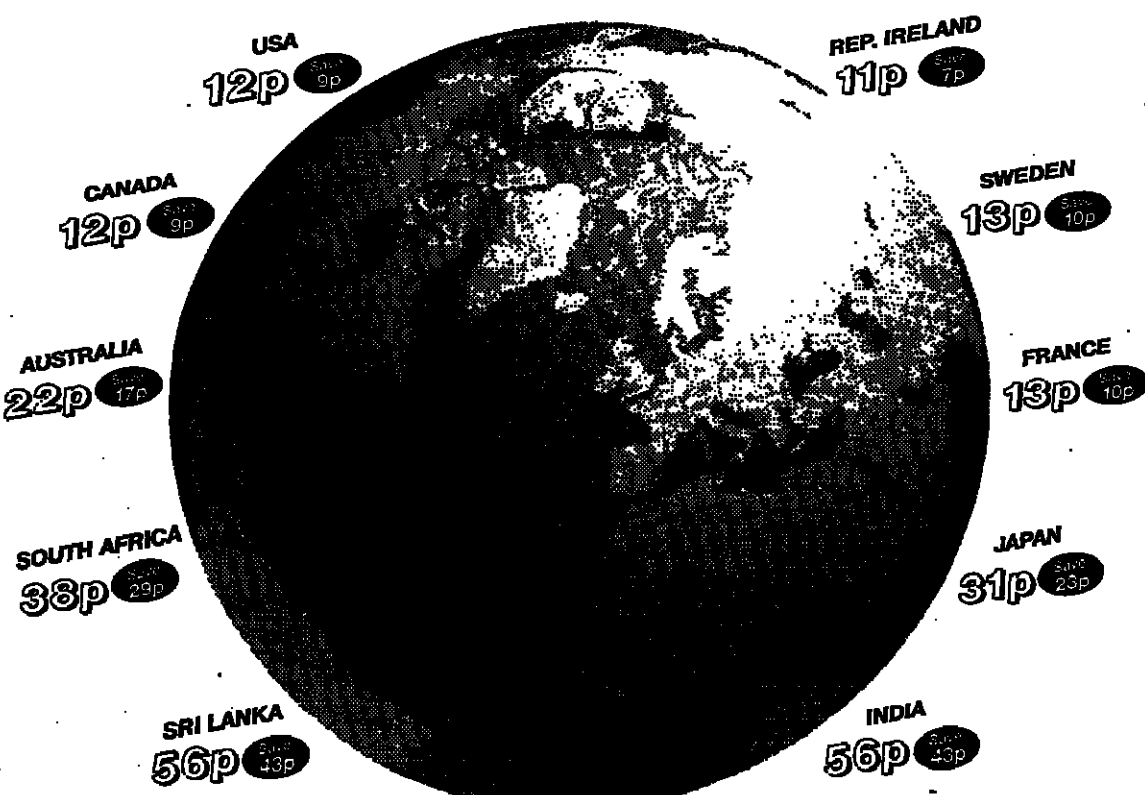
"This has happened before with potatoes. In one case, a farmer had half a field taken in one night."

Tesco's concern has puzzled the National Farmers

Union. Trevor Hayes, of its insurance department, said: "Rustling is normally an issue of cattle. Christmas trees sometimes go missing, but I have never heard of any claims about asparagus."

But he conceded that not all farmers were covered against theft and there could be a risk.

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Recently, I've veered more into the realms of restaurant criticism - a vital role for any real writer in these pivotal times.

Bel Littlejohn

Comment, page 13

'Behaviour of some so unacceptable it damages the life chances of their children and the ability of teachers to teach'

Blunkett attacks negligent parents

Vivek Chaudhary
Education Correspondent

SOME parents refuse to discipline their children for behaving badly in school and are damaging their life chances, Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett said yesterday.

His stinging attack on parents who fail to control their children came at the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers conference in Scarborough, where he said the ability of teachers to teach was being undermined by a small minority of parents who failed to discipline their children.

Mr Blunkett said afterwards that the Crime and Disorder Bill going through Parliament would force parents to take parenting classes if their children continually broke legal orders such as refusing to attend school.

He told delegates: "The behaviour of some parents is so unacceptable that it damages the life chances of their children and the ability of teachers to teach those children. Unacceptable behaviour needs to be tackled wherever it is."

Mr Blunkett also called for earlier intervention to help badly behaved children who, he said, have badly behaved

children themselves and become caught in a vicious circle. "We need the earliest intervention to ensure that youngsters coming maybe don't disrupt the education of other children."

Mr Blunkett later said: "I have had head teachers who tell me that every time they take on youngsters they have parents who abuse them, verbally and physically, setting an example which damages the credibility of teachers."

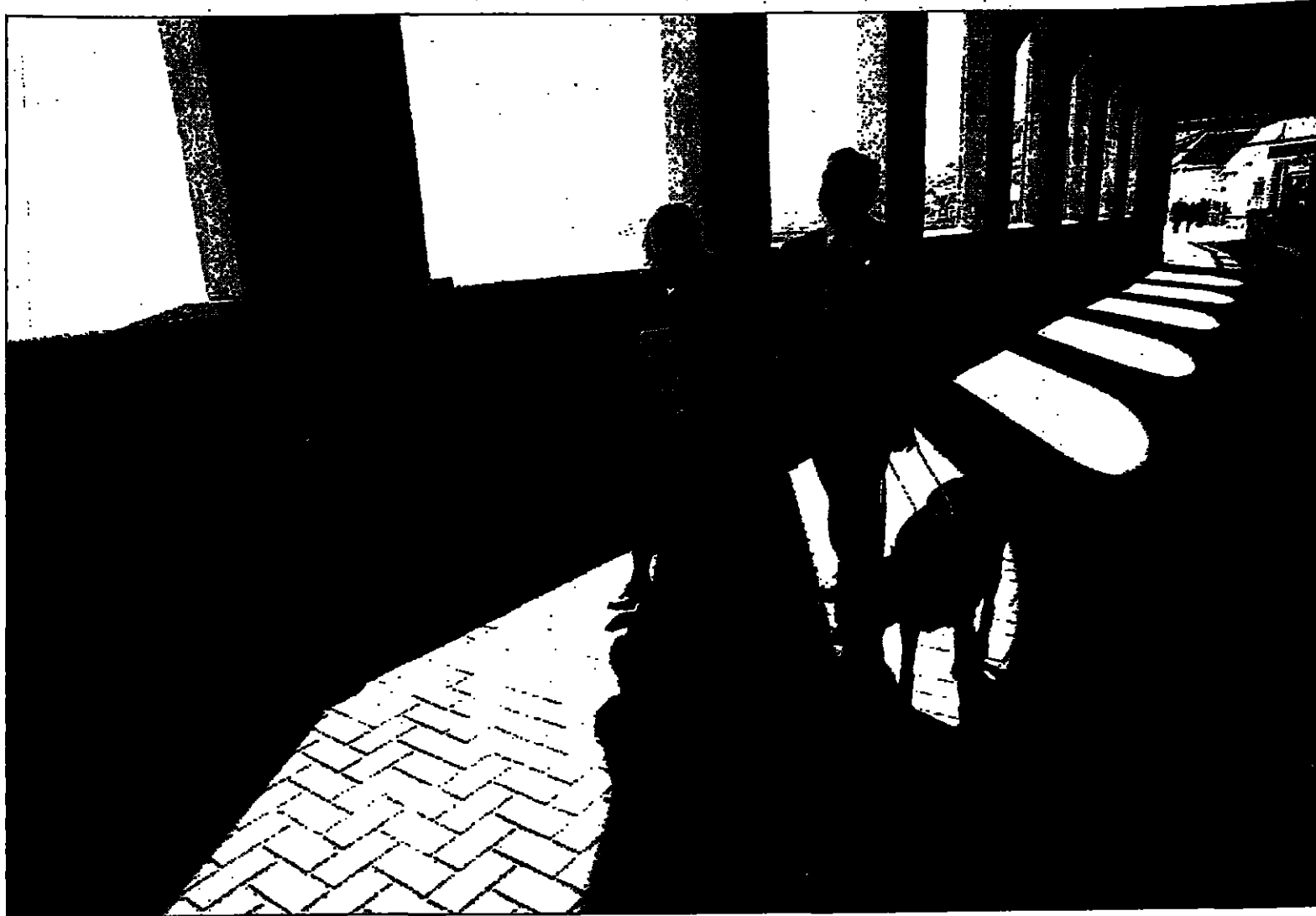
"We need to look at how we can be as tough as nails on parents who don't accept that they have responsibility for the life chances of their child."

Mr Blunkett's attack was welcomed by delegates and Nigel de Gruchy, the union general secretary, who claimed his members refuse to teach an average of 50 disruptive pupils each year, often facing abuse from parents.

Mr Blunkett told the conference that pupils with behavioural and emotional problems did not fall into this category and should not be dumped into schools with few resources to deal with them. He claimed the policy to integrate such pupils into mainstream schools led to more disruption in classrooms.

He said: "We don't expect teachers to be social workers, we expect teachers to teach."

Delegates were told the Government was anxious to avoid industrial action by



Education Secretary David Blunkett and his private secretary, Katie Farrington, take a walk before his conference speech. PHOTOGRAPH: TONY BARTHOLOMEW

teachers and was willing to do all it could to tackle bureaucracy and excessive paperwork in schools.

The NASUWT and the National Union of Teachers have voted in favour of industrial action over teachers' workload and bureaucracy, which they claim prevent them from teaching in class.

Mr Blunkett said a circular would be issued to head teachers over the next few days outlining how they can cut red tape and he would reconvene a working group of teaching unions to write it.

He said: "It's a common sense solution to a genuine problem. If it helps us to achieve our targets [in education] then it's in the best interests of every one of us."

The NASUWT action, due to begin in two weeks, does not involve striking but is based around measures such as limiting after-school meetings to one a week and restricting teachers' reports to parents to 400 words.

Mr de Gruchy said his union would be willing to withdraw from industrial action if the circular contained "all the right things".

Mr Blunkett also announced that £23 million would be given to help provide 9,000 teachers and head teachers with laptops.

Delegates were urged to clamp down on bullying teachers, who often bully colleagues. One woman claimed she was accused of sleeping with a colleague by a bullying head teacher who systematically bullied other members of staff. Other delegates claimed many teachers suffered from stress and illness because of senior teachers who bullied them.

Sex War simmers in the kitchen

Amelia Gentleman

DESPITE feminism and the popularity of "girl power", women are still finding it hard to cook from the kitchen, according to research showing that the nation's cooking is still overwhelmingly done by women.

More than 90 per cent of women questioned in the BBC Good Food Magazine's survey of the country's cooking habits said they prepared supper every night for their husbands or partners, while a mere 20 per cent of men said they cooked on a nightly basis and 23 per cent said they would never do so for their wives or girlfriends.

However, two-thirds of the men said they cooked for their partners on a regular basis, and 94 per cent felt confident enough to whip up a whole meal if necessary.

But while 7 per cent of women said they had been reduced to tears when cooking for one person, just 1 per cent of men had similarly sobbed.

A spokeswoman for the feminist organisation Rights of Women was unsurprised by the findings.

"This is a depressing reminder of how much there is to be done. If we don't have equality in such basic areas as washing-up and cooking, it becomes difficult to address more serious and wider issues. We need to work harder at breaking down barriers between what is seen as women's work and men's work."

The study also found that most British cooks are shy about subjecting friends to their cooking. Although 95 per cent said they could easily create an entire meal for themselves, most said they would never risk cooking for guests.

The magazine's editor, Orlando Murrin, commented: "Undoubtedly culinary standards have improved enormously, but when guests are added to the mix, most people seem to experience something resembling stage fright."

Snouts out as police convert informants into 'sources'

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

THEY have had many names — snout, grass, snitch, mark, rat, squealer, canary — but now they may have a new one. Police informants could soon find themselves being repack-

aged with a more user-friendly description. A national conference of 150 detectives yesterday discussed the benefits of coming up with something a little more positive — and in future people who pass on information could be reborn as "agents" or "sources".

"There was a discussion as

to whether 'informant' was the right name because of its connotations," said Roy Penrose, the head of the new National Crime Squad who represented the crime committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers at the conference in Lincolnshire. The mood of the conference was for a change with "agent"

or "source" being two of the most favoured suggestions. "We had to look at the psychological side of it and ask whether that [a different name] would help them to feel more part of the team," said Mr Penrose.

The police are increasingly dependent on paid informers to provide intelligence on or-

ganised crime and are anxious that people should not be put off because of derogatory terms. It also emerged in the conference that there are around 500 juvenile informants assisting the police. Guidelines for how to handle the issue of teenagers were looked at.

Mr Penrose said that al-

though 500 might seem a high figure, it should be balanced against the high proportion of crime — around 40 per cent — committed by young offenders. Unformed officers, who are most likely to encounter those able to give information, might also receive special training in the han-

dling of "sources" if conference suggestions are adopted. Whatever their name, informants have an ancient pedigree. Jonathan Wild, the 18th century master-informer who was known as Thief-taker-General, lived a life of luxury. His exploits are chronicled in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.

Cinema design classic ditched



Kamal Ahmed
Media Correspondent

ONE of the design classics of the 20th century, the Odeon sign in red neon lights, is to be abandoned by the cinema chain as part of a £30 million redesign.

The sign and Odeon logo, launched in the 1930s, will be replaced by more modern silver lettering which the company said would lay to rest the dies-pit image of cinemas which the industry has been trying to shake off for more than 10 years.

"The old sign has a hint of the 1970s about it and that is a negative image in some people's mind," said Ross Jones, marketing manager of Odeon Cinemas. "We want Odeon to occupy the high ground in cinema, like BMW

does in the motor industry." The decision was criticised by members of the design and cinema community who accused Odeon, Britain's oldest cinema chain, of jettisoning a part of the nation's heritage.

Its logo change follows controversial redesigns by the BBC, RAC, British Airways and the British Tourist Authority which have attempted to prepare the companies for the new millennium.

"This is extremely bad news and we will be watching developments closely," said Ken Powell, director of the 20th Century Society.

"The Odeon was a very important aspect of the 1930s modernist style, it was a national phenomenon which was copied elsewhere. The original Odeon name was an essential part of that."

Richard Gray, chairman of the Cinema Theatre Association, had hoped to persuade the company to keep the red Odeon name at its flagship site, the unlisted Odeon Leicester Square, but was unsuccessful. "The neon sign and lighting which picked out parts of the building were part of the architecture," he said. "To change that approach is a shame."

Odeon has shut its Leicester Square cinema for a revamp as part of the redesign. It will reopen in the summer.

As well as replacing the red logo on the 12th floor, the cinema will have a silver balcony overlooking the square which will be used for premieres. The interior will see many of the 1930s elements, such as the flying lady plaster figures, restored.

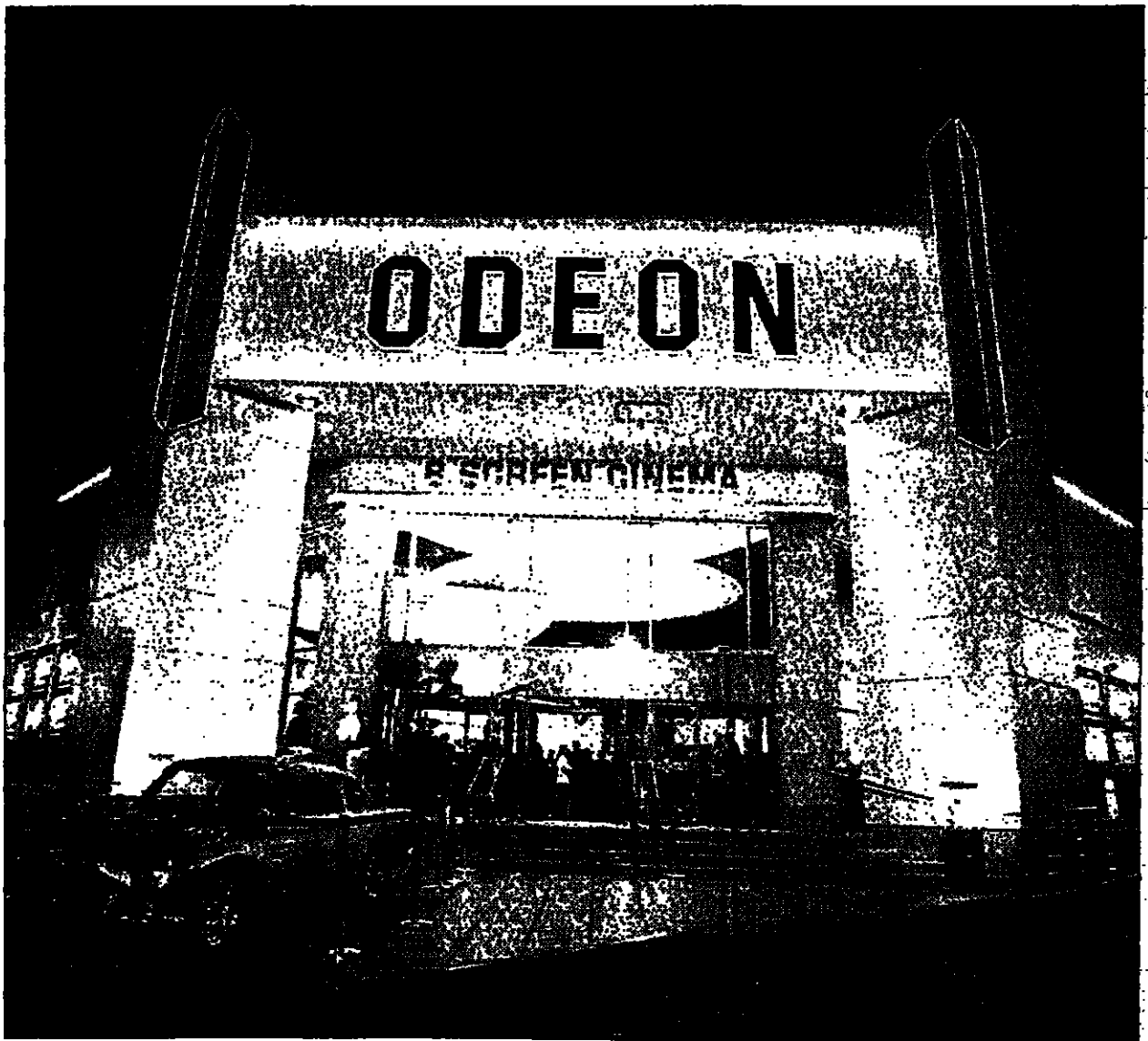
The changes are part of a

overhaul of the Odeon's 76 cinemas over the next two years to take advantage of the huge growth in cinema audiences over the past decade. Multiplexes are being built in Liverpool, Blackpool, Kilmarnock in Ayrshire and Maidstone in Kent.

Mr Jones denied the company, which became part of the Rank Group in the 1940s, was abandoning more than 50 years of history. "The Odeon's heritage is very important to us all. But we also want to show we are going forward."

The first Odeon was opened in 1930 in Ferry Barr, Birmingham, by Oscar Deutsch, the son of Jewish immigrants born in the city in 1883. He wanted an upmarket cinema chain and developed the "Odeon style" which became a standard bearer for the art deco period.

A spokeswoman for Group 4



A new Odeon in Kettering, which opened in December 1997, and (top left) the old Odeon sign. PHOTOGRAPH (LEFT): FRANK BARON

Inquiry into jail adviser's new Group 4 job

Luke Harding

THE civil servant responsible for designing the regime of secure training centres for juvenile offenders has been offered a job by Group 4.

The appointment of Malcolm Stevens is so sensitive it has been referred to the Cabinet Office for approval. Whitehall guidelines restrict senior civil servants from jumping from the public to the private sector through the so-called revolving door, the well-trodden route taken by former Conservative

ministers on to the boards of companies they helped to privatise.

Mr Stevens, a Home Office official, was responsible for drawing up the tendering arrangements which allowed private companies to run the new regime of "child jails", originally proposed by the Conservatives.

Just before the general election Group 4 successfully won the contract to operate Britain's first secure training centre at Medway in Kent.

Although the scheme was vigorously attacked by Labour in opposition, in office the Home Secretary,

Jack Straw, said it would be too expensive to cancel.

The centre accepts its first 12- to 14-year-old criminal "trainee" later today.

Mr Stevens has been offered a "senior position" with Group 4. He recently left the civil service because of poor health, it is understood.

Group 4 has also won the lucrative contract to run a second secure training centre in Olney, Northamptonshire. It is expected Mr Stevens will advise Group 4 on how to secure the contract for a third training centre, already approved for Medomsley, Co Durham.

The new centres will eventually cost more than £30 million a year to run.

"The job offer has caused raised eyebrows," a Home Office source said yesterday. "His entire job in the Prison Service was to advise the Home Office and Department of Health about who should be placed in secure units. It is a one thing to get information as a civil servant. It is another to use it for commercial advantage. If he had gone on to join a utility this would be a matter for the regulator."

A spokeswoman for Group 4 yesterday confirmed that Mr Stevens had been offered a senior position but said his appointment was subject to Cabinet Office approval. "We strongly adhere to Cabinet Office procedure," she added. Sources at Group 4 complained that the firm was damaged if it recruited people with expertise and damned if it took on inexperienced staff, compounding its reputation for amateurism.

Mr Stevens began his career in probation before moving to the Department of Health as a civil servant. He was later seconded to the Home Office and the prison department, where he became a specialist on "very serious"

juvenile offenders. He was also involved in the case of Mary Bell, the 11-year-old jailed 30 years ago for the manslaughter of two boys aged three and four.

The Government has decided to press ahead with the secure training centres, which have been dubbed "colleges of crime", despite strong opposition. Group 4 hopes that its "brisk and busy" regime at Medway will help stop very young offenders, most of whom will have notched up more than 50 burglaries and car thefts, from continuing their lives of crime.

Asian officer arrested in police race-hate inquiry

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

AN ASIAN police officer has been arrested and suspended from duty in connection with an investigation into a race-hate campaign.

A Scotland Yard spokesman confirmed yesterday that the officer, based in west London, was arrested on Wednesday during an investigation into racist material sent to officers of Asian origin. Abusive letters had been sent and racist material distributed through the internal mail to officers from ethnic minorities.

"Police arrested a serving police officer on suspicion of publishing and distributing material which is likely to incite racial hatred and on suspicion of perverting the course of justice between December 1997 and January 1998," a Scotland Yard spokesman said yesterday. "The suspect has been taken to a north-west London police station." The officer was released on police bail yesterday.

Chief Inspector Andrew Hards, who is leading the inquiry, said in a statement: "The commissioner has made it quite clear that racism in the service in any shape or form will not be tolerated."

Nuclear to Than

Nobody really knows whether or not this stuff will cause any harm

Tories expect council gains

The Tories expect to gain seats in the upcoming local elections, according to a new poll. The poll shows that the Tories are expected to win a majority of seats in the upcoming local elections.

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The Guardian Friday April 17 1998

BRITAIN 7

Aldermaston weapons plant seeks permission for one-off discharge of radioactive tritium waste, an element linked to birth defects

Nuclear risk to Thames

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

PERMISSION to dump two tanks of radioactive waste into the River Thames is being sought by the nuclear warhead manufacturing plant at Aldermaston in Berkshire.

The one-off discharge from storage tanks on site would increase 20-fold the permitted limit of tritium allowed to be piped into the Thames at Pangbourne.

Water from the river is siphoned off to be used for drinking in London.

The proposal is part of a new application to the Environment Agency to vary discharges from Aldermaston into the river, air and sewage systems surrounding the plant where Trident nuclear warheads are made and old weapons dismantled.

How two 50 cubic metre tanks came to contain liquid tritium waste is an official secret and both the Environment Agency and the privatised Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) refuse to discuss it.

But under new rules which have removed Crown immunity since privatisation, the

'Nobody really knows whether or not this stuff will cause any harm'

because they have done it in the past is not an excuse to let them do it in the future. Nobody really knows whether or not this stuff will cause any harm.

David Rendel, Liberal Democrat MP for Newbury, said: "There have been a lot of radiation issues in Newbury since 1990, especially with the leukaemia clusters. If the current levels are realistic, a proposed 20-fold increase is very concerning."

Graham Hammond of AWE said overall discharges would be reduced. The emptying of the tanks was a one-off. The Environment Agency would study the 69 pages of detailed proposals and ask questions.

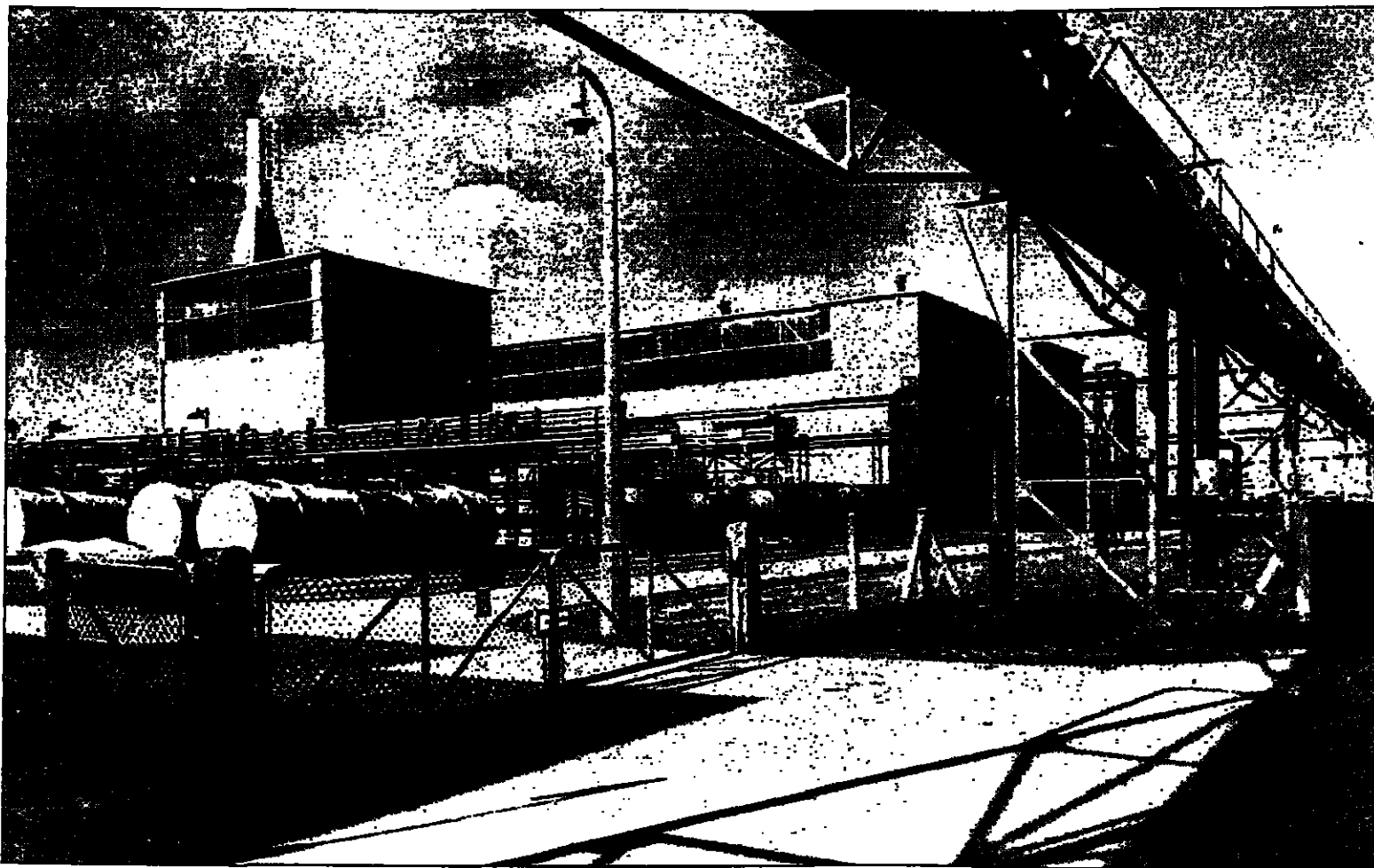
Peter Brember, the Environment Agency's regulator in the Thames region, said the application was to ease decommissioning of old buildings and old weapons as well as the making of new ones. Each element in the proposal would be examined in detail before public consultation in the autumn.

application for a new licence to discharge must be put out to public consultation and for the first time local people will be allowed to object.

Among the objectors will be the Nuclear Awareness Group which is already concerned about child deaths from leukaemia and associated cancers which are five times above the national average at nearby Newbury.

Evelyn Parker, a spokeswoman for the group, said she was concerned with the proposals. "In humans tritium has been linked to damage to DNA, potentially resulting in Down's syndrome and other birth defects. It is also linked to testicular cancer."

Local councillor Tony Ferguson, who sits on the AWE liaison committee, said: "Just



The weapons plant at Aldermaston... The proposal to discharge tritium into the Thames at Pangbourne will increase permitted levels 20-fold

Tories expect council gains

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

THE Conservatives predicted yesterday they would make their first big gains in the suburbs since their leader, William Hague, promised a "fresh future" after their shattering defeat at last year's general election.

Sir Norman Fowler, the party's environment spokesman, promised gains in next month's local elections in the London boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Bexley and Croydon, and to keep the Westminster and Wandsworth flagships.

But he was coy about winning elsewhere. Notably, he did not predict big gains in Liberal Democrat strongholds in Richmond, Sutton and Kingston or in the shire districts outside the capital.

He was also quiet about whether the party would benefit from a split between New and Old Labour in the London borough of Enfield — which returned its first ever Labour MP, Stephen Twigg, when he defeated Michael Portillo last May.

Sir Norman announced a new party policy to crack down on abuses of power by councils. Independent committees should be set up to

monitor their work. "If there were concerns that expenses were being charged, trips being taken — some of the things that have come up in the last few months — then they could be dealt with very rapidly."

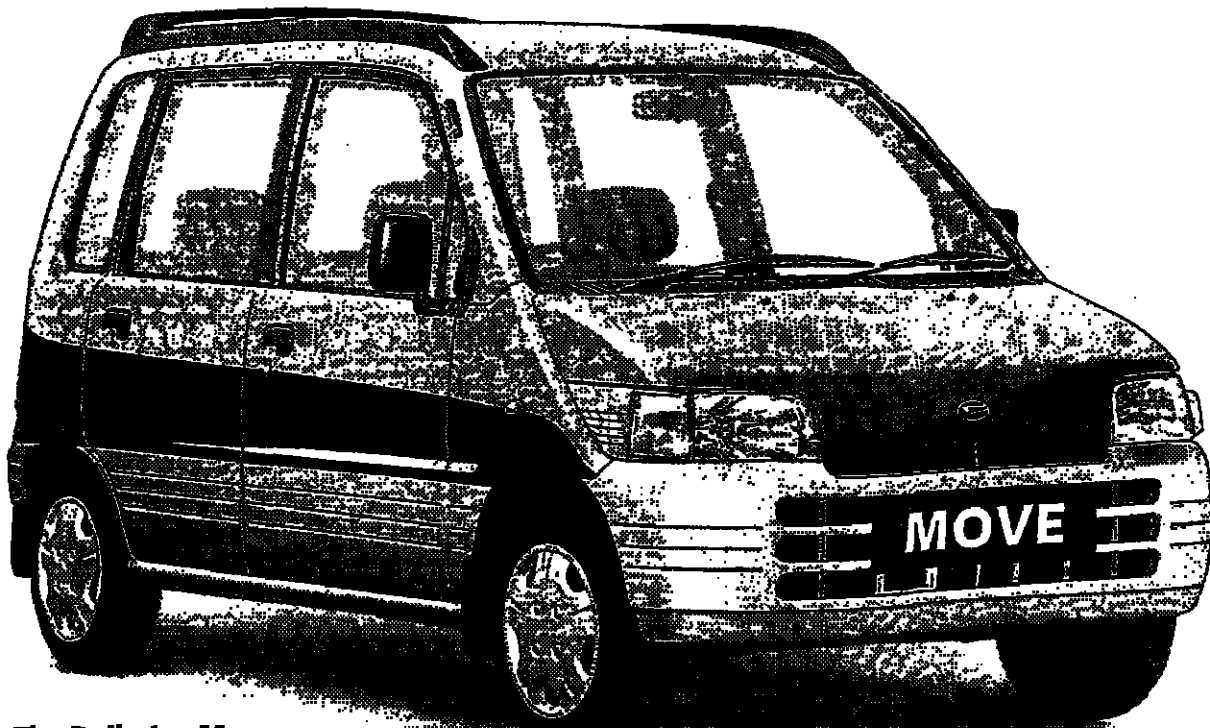
Lord Parkinson, the party chairman, said the Tories had been re-organising since May. "We're sorting ourselves out. We've made tremendous progress in the last few months internally and organisationally. But it's pretty early days," he said at the launch of the party's campaign.

However, Hilary Armstrong, the local government minister, said: "The Tories say they have learned the lessons of their general election defeat, but their record in local government shows this is just not true. Just 16 days ago boundary changes put the Tories in charge in Essex county council, and the Tories' priority was to cut education spending by £3 million, social services by £8 million and spend more money on roads."

Council seats are up for election in 36 metropolitan councils, 32 London boroughs, 10 all-purpose authorities and 68 shire districts — involving about 30 million voters across England.

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The Guardian

A life that weighed 2m deaths

Cambodians find it hard to believe Pol Pot is dead, writes Nick Cumming-Bruce

SATISFACTION at the death of Pol Pot was absent from the streets of the Cambodian capital yesterday, as was any hint of regret in the strange scenes unfolding round the corpse stretched out by his former followers near the Thai border.

Such public reticence marks the diminishing influence his Khmer Rouge has on daily life in Cambodia — and the depth of the scars he inflicted on his people.

"How do I know he's dead," asked a Phnom Penh motor-cycle taxi driver. "But when I heard he might be dead, it reminded me of my six brothers and sisters who were killed during the Pol Pot regime."

Cambodia will not swiftly digest the death of the former school teacher, known for his

charm, who became in the words of his former prisoner King Norodom Sihanouk, "one of the most terrible monsters ever created by humanity".

His death at the age of 72 lifts from his countrymen the shadow of a tyranny that earned him a place alongside Stalin and Mao Zedong as one of the 20th century's most potent icons of terror.

In contrast to their epic careers, Pol Pot needed less than four years after marching to power in Phnom Penh in 1975 to unleash a holocaust that made the rice fields of this once sleepy Asian backwater synonymous with genocide.

Cambodia's plunge into carnage did not start with Pol Pot. Psychiatrists treating the



'The Jewish people's search for justice didn't end with the death of Hitler, and the Cambodian people's search for justice didn't end with the death of Pol Pot'

Bones on display at one of Pol Pot's killing fields
PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD VOGEL

psychiatrists that still cripples untold numbers of Cambodians find themselves working through layers of trauma: the brutal experience of American bombing, the devastation of escalating war.

But there is hardly a family untouched by the reign of Khmer Rouge terror that caused the deaths of some 2 million people — between a quarter and a third of the population.

Pol Pot, of course, never accepted the accusation. "Mistakes", was how he summed up the slaughter in the rare interviews he gave shortly after he lost power, and again last year when the bosses of the already much depleted Khmer Rouge submitted him to the humiliation of a show trial.

"I came to carry out the struggle, not to kill people," he said on that occasion.

"To say that millions died is too much."

His recollection hardly squares with the findings of researchers who in recent years have extensively, if not exhaustively, mapped the mass graves of his victims and traced through documents an elaborate network of death camps created to purge his enemies, real or imaginary.

Little wonder then that to

many Cambodians simple death is too easy a fate for Pol Pot.

"The Jewish people's search for justice didn't end with the death of Hitler, and the Cambodian people's search for justice didn't end with the death of Pol Pot," said Dith Pran, the press interpreter and guide whose survival and escape from Pol Pot's rule was told in David Puttnam's film *The Killing Fields*.

"If he really is dead, it's not the end yet," said Youk Chhang, director of the genocide documentation centre in Phnom Penh. "There is still more to do."

Such feelings help to explain some of the suspicion that will linger round Pol Pot's death.

It came conveniently at the moment when Washington was considering the possibility of bringing him to trial for

his crimes against humanity. An Asian street-gang member, Tak Tan, was found guilty in Los Angeles yesterday of murdering Haing Ngor, a Cambodian who survived the killing fields to star as Dith Pran in David Puttnam's film of that name, and who died in a robbery outside his US home in 1996.

Leader comment, page 8; Obituary, page 14

UN chief unveils blueprint to end African conflicts

Victoria Brittain

THE United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, yesterday unveiled a plan for Africa which could bring an end to wars and stabilisation activity in at least seven countries: Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Mr Annan's blueprint for action by UN member states would curb arms sales and covert arms trafficking, end economic sanctions which harm civilians, accept the Organisation of African Unity's plan to cancel all debt for the poorest countries, and toughen administration of refugee camps so that civilians can not be used as shields by terrorists.

The blunt report says, of Rwanda, Somalia and Liberia, that "by not averting these colossal human tragedies, African leaders have failed the peoples of Africa; the international community has failed them; the United Nations has failed them".

Such criticism is rare from a UN diplomat speaking on the record. Mr Annan has been one for so long that he can judge better than anyone the impact the report will have on UN member governments. The initiative will be taken up at ministerial level in New York on April 24.

With the new international interest in Africa symbolised

by President Clinton's recent visit, UN officials hope that both African and Western countries will find it impossible to ignore its challenges.

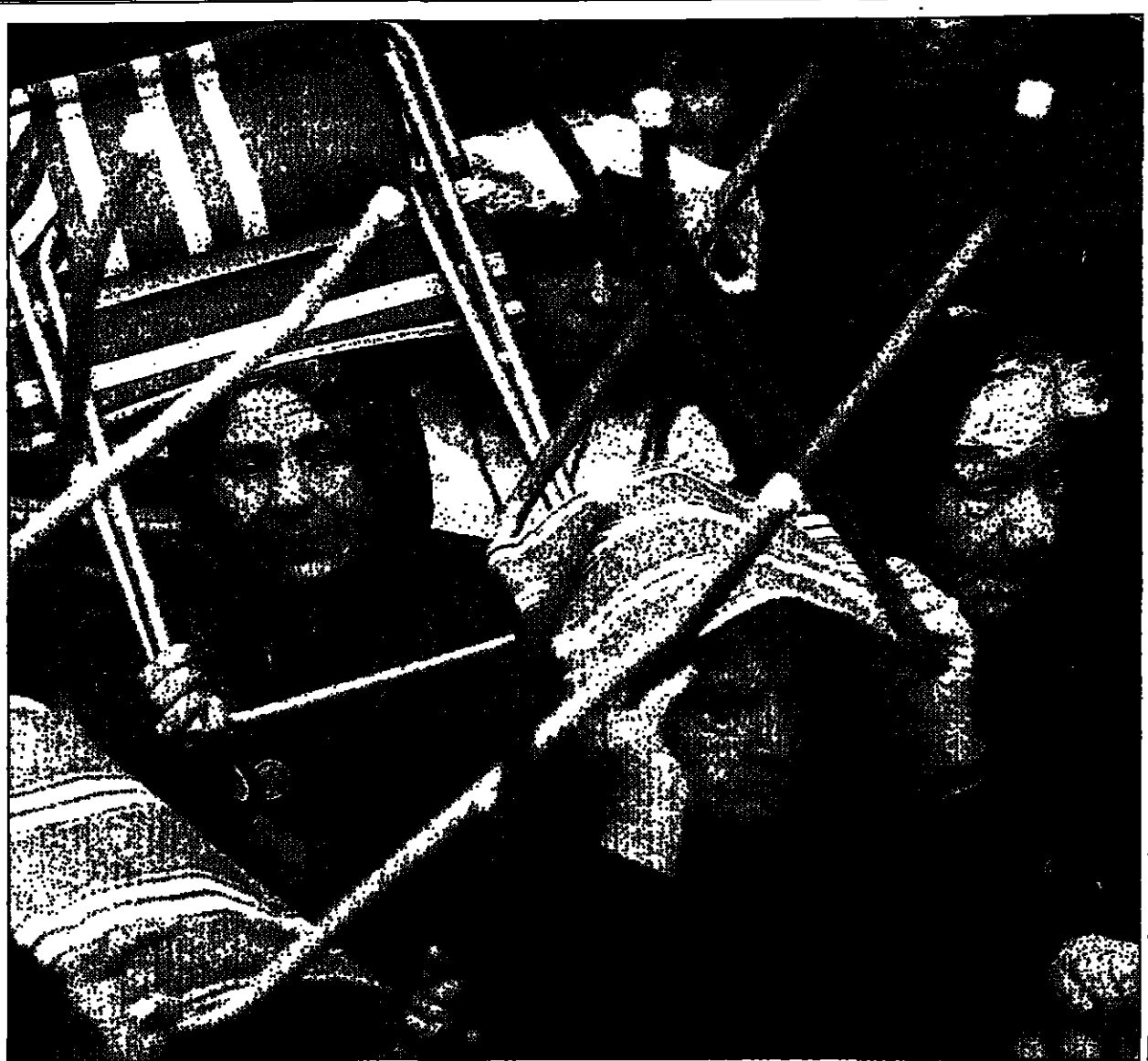
The UN itself is already clearly accepting the report's call for different practices and an open admission of failures.

Mr Annan is expected to announce today that he is pulling out his human rights investigative team from the former Zaire. Months of attempted investigation of killings in the eastern part of the country have been lost in wrangling between the UN team and Congolese officials.

Mr Annan's demand for neutrality in refugee camps, and for them to be moved away from borders, is a tacit recognition that the UN refugee agency failed badly in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, when it allowed its camps to be used for the rearming of Hutu extremists.

The recommendation on ending blanket economic sanctions and instead freezing the assets of decision-makers may provide the US and British governments with a way out of their increasingly isolated position on maintaining sanctions against Iraq and Libya.

Few African governments will be happy at the prospect of reducing their arms budgets but most will be happy with Mr Annan's proposed squeeze on arms traders.



Greek Orthodox Christians shelter from a thunderstorm during a feet-washing ceremony in Jerusalem's Old City ahead of the Orthodox Easter. Earlier a bolt of lightning hit a mosque next door, showering the Christian worshippers with stone fragments and causing some to shout 'Miracle' and 'Jesus is coming'

News in brief

Nigeria's main party votes for Abacha

NIGERIA'S ruling United Nigeria Congress Party yesterday adopted military ruler General Sani Abacha as its candidate for the August presidential election, the party said.

The UNCP took more than 65 per cent of seats at the last national election in December for state assemblies and is one of four out of five registered parties that proposed Gen Abacha, aged 54, as a single consensus candidate.

Gen Abacha has not said if he will stand for the presidency, but he is believed to want to retain power after his promised restoration of democracy in October. — *Reuters, Kaduna*.

Attempt to free aid workers

THE International Committee of the Red Cross said yesterday it had been told that clan leader Mohammed Ali Mahdi was trying to win the release of 10 aid workers being held in Somalia.

The ICRC called for the nine foreigners and Somali engineer to be freed and said it was withdrawing seven remaining expatriate staff, pending an end to the crisis. The 10 workers kidnapped from an airstrip north of Mogadishu on Wednesday, include seven ICRC workers and two other foreign aid staff. — *Reuters, Geneva*.

Fault grounds space zoo

A FAILED data processor forced Nasa to delay yesterday's launch of the space shuttle Columbia on a two-week mission to study the brain and nervous system as never before.

Nasa is to try again today to launch the shuttle, its crew and more than 2,000 creatures, including rats, mice, crickets, fish and snails. — *Reuters, Cape Canaveral*.

Havel faces knife again

THE Czech president, Vaclav Havel, will require a second operation on his intestine in about six weeks, the Austrian press agency APA quoted Innsbruck University Hospital's chief surgeon, Ernst Bodner, as saying yesterday.

Dr Bodner removed about 12 inches of Mr Havel's gut on Tuesday after he fell ill while on holiday with his wife in the Tyrolean Alps. — *Reuters, Vienna*.

Reaching for the sky

HANDS raised in triumph. Alain "Spiderman" Robert stands on the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde, Paris, having hauled himself up the 78ft monument using only his finger-holds provided by his assistant Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Mr Robert, aged 35, from Valence, France, has scaled 80 skyscrapers in his global pursuit of publicity stunts.

"It was a super climb," he said yesterday as he descended into the arms of the waiting police for his 35th arrest. — *AP*.

PHOTOGRAPH: JACK GUZZ

Road crash deaths rise

SOUTH AFRICAN police said yesterday the death toll in a five-vehicle smash in the eastern province of KwaZulu-Natal had risen to 31, including 27 children.

A further 50 were injured, many seriously, after a school bus, horse and trailer, mini-bus, car and taxi collided on open road outside the town of Newcastle on Wednesday afternoon.

A police spokesman, Captain Godfrey Nyebe, said police were investigating the accident. An official said the children, aged between seven and 15, were from local schools and that many were in a critical condition. — *Reuters, Johannesburg*.

Turks push against Kurds

TURKISH troops have killed 18 more Kurdish rebels in a big push in the mountainous south-east, taking the death toll in three days of clashes to 93, a security official said yesterday.

He said a large force was fighting between 120 and 200 Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerrillas around Cudi mountain, along the Iraqi border. Turkish F-16 fighter jets took off from a military base near the regional capital of Diyarbakir on bombing runs against the rebels, witnesses said.

Officials say the push is designed to prevent the PKK from renewing its campaign for Kurdish self-rule after emerging from winter hideouts in northern Iraq. — *Reuters, Diyarbakir*.

Napalm train heads home

A TRAINLOAD of napalm that triggered protests when it was shipped halfway across the United States is apparently headed back to California.

The 12,000 gallons of jellied petrol, benzene and polystyrene was being held in Kansas City yesterday while the navy searched for a waste management company to handle it. A navy spokesman said it would probably be sent to the China Lake naval weapons testing centre, 120 miles north-west of Los Angeles. — *AP, Washington*.

MediaGuardian

Every Monday in the

The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

Race goes to the loud, not to the swift

Martin Kettle in Washington

IT HAS become a familiar sight in marathon races in the United States: a group of Kenyan athletes coolly and relentlessly taking the rest of the field apart, leaving the locals far behind as sweating and panting also-rans.

Familiar and, to an increasing number of United States road-race organisers and their sponsors, unwelcome. In an overtly anti-African, and in many eyes racist, move several US race organisers are barring or limiting Kenyan entrants and offering higher prize money to American runners.

The prestigious annual Boulder Boulder race in Colorado has just restricted Kenyan entrants to three places in next month's contest. Ken-

yans took six of the first eight places last year and eight of the first 10 in 1996. American runners will be allowed unlimited entries.

The race director, Bill Reef was explicitly protectionist about the restrictions. "It's our country, our event, our money. American sponsors want American winners, or at least Americans among the top finishers."

He says he wants to level the playing field. But that is not how the Kenyans see it. To them, the restrictions flout the international nature of the global athletics circuit and prevent them earning their living as professional runners wherever they can.

Last year Kenyans won the Boston, New York and Honolulu marathons and dozens of other events. This year they have won six of the eight races so far on the professional road racing circuit and

hold the first seven places on the overall money list.

They also offend by not giving the kind of up-beat interviews after the race that the organisers and sponsors crave. They often appear quiet, withdrawn and uneasy amid the promotional razzmatazz — and several organisers are not prepared to put up with it any longer.

It is not hard to see why the organisers of the Gate River run in Jacksonville, Florida, were the first to restrict prize money to Americans. An American, Todd Williams, finished first in last month's race and ended a state-wide television interview by saying "I love Jacksonville. And I love Gate."

The Kenyan Godfrey Kiprotich says: "Last year I won a race and got \$2,500. The first American far behind me, got \$5,000. How can the American be motivated to run better?"

Lawsuit accuses DiCaprio of conspiracy

Christopher Reed in Los Angeles

IF LITIGATION is a mark of Hollywood success, then the star of *Titanic* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*, Leonardo DiCaprio, can truly claim to be paying the price of fame.

For the second time in three weeks his name appears on a lawsuit filed in Los Angeles. This time he is being sued for \$10 million (\$2 million) for allegedly blocking the release of a black-and-white film he made in 1995 as a favour to friends.

Last month he sued *Playboy* magazine to stop the publica-

tion of a full-frontal nude picture of him in its July issue.

The new lawsuit against DiCaprio is typical of those often faced by actors in Hollywood who achieve rapid success. Producer David Shulman is demanding compensation from DiCaprio and his friend, actor Tobey Maguire for "egomaniacal" behaviour and breach of contract.

He said DiCaprio agreed to appear in the film for \$575 a day and a share in any profits. When it was first screened in June, 1996, DiCaprio "jumped out of his seat several times laughing, and clapping high-fives with his friends," says the suit.



DiCaprio: Faces \$10m bill for 'breach of contract'

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Divided Europe

Poverty belt jolts EU ideal

A survey shows social policies have not closed the gap between the rich and poor, writes **Martin Walker** in Brussels

EUROPE'S plan for a single currency and single economic policy has received a jolt of reality from a new survey that reveals wide variations in wealth, with parts of Greece, Spain and Italy receiving less than a fifth of the annual income per head of the richer regions.

Incomes range from an average £30,000 per head in the north German port city of Hamburg, the richest single region in Europe, to about a sixth of that in areas of Crete, Calabria and Extremadura.

The differences are more extreme than those between the richest and poorest American states, despite the European Union's claim to have created a single market and the EU model of generous social policies and welfare payments.

The survey defines the poverty belt as regions where the GDP per head is less than 75 per cent of the EU average. It includes all of Greece and all of Portugal except Lisbon, rural Spain, southern Italy and the former East Germany. Areas of Austria, Merseyside and South Yorkshire are included.

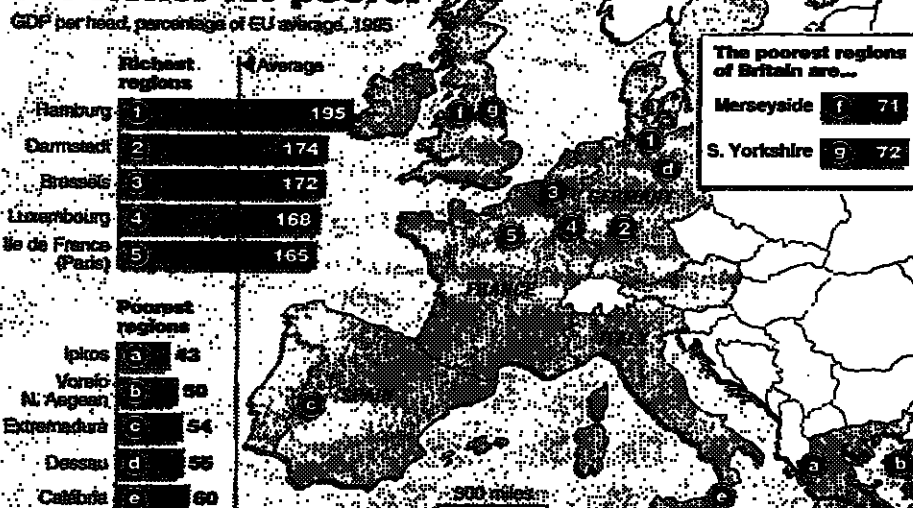
The formal launch next month of European monetary union, with 11 countries signing up for the single currency, now faces the practical challenge of devising an EU monetary policy which can cater for these different income levels and economies.

Euro-sceptics in Britain and across Europe said the figures backed arguments against the single currency. "The plain fact is that you cannot run a common economic and monetary policy for a Europe as diverse as this. It is an economic calculus that simply does not add



A woman begs for money on a street in Athens. A new European Union survey shows Greece is among the poorest countries in the EU

For richer for poorer



West, in getting EU money for the region.

"My region of North Yorkshire got £130 million last year from Europe, while all the rest of Yorkshire and Humberside got only £100 million," the leader of the Tory MEPs, Edward MacMillan-Scott, said.

The statistical picture of two Europes — a rich north and a poor south — endures despite decades of subsidies and financial aid from Brussels. The EU structural funds, worth £25 billion a year, are intended to even out the differences, but the survey figures highlight the limitations

of social policies. The figures show that national capitals have the monopoly on jobs and high incomes.

Brussels, Paris, Madrid, Lisbon, Stockholm, Vienna and Greater London stand out in their countries as islands of wealth. Greater London is the only British region to

make the top 12 of Europe's regions, with a GDP per head of 139 per cent of the EU average.

The survey reveals sharp differences within individual countries. Hamburg, for example, enjoys almost four times the income per head of former East German provinces. Despite high levels of unemployment, Germany has the richest regions: five out of Europe's top 10 are in Germany.

With £22,500 per head, Brussels is more than twice as wealthy as the depressed former mining region of Hainaut, barely 50 miles down the road. Paris, on £22,400 a head, is more than twice as wealthy as Corsica and Langue-doc. Lombardy, Italy's richest region with just over £13,000 per head, is nearly three times better off than Calabria, with barely £5,000.

The statistics released by Eurostat, the EU statistical arm, are expressed in terms of comparable local purchasing power rather than cash. **Eurostat report: GDP in The Regions.** Available on Internet: <http://europa.eu.int/eurostat.html>

Chirac calls for French unity in favour of euro

Paul Webster in Paris

IN AN attempt to head off a parliamentary revolt against the euro, President Jacques Chirac called a press conference yesterday to make his strongest commitment yet to political and economic European union.

The Gaullist president backed an initiative by Lionel Jospin, the Socialist prime minister who will address the French national assembly on Tuesday, before a debate in which conservative and Communist Euro-sceptics hope to stop the single currency coming into effect on January 1.

Mr Chirac said he shared the government's view that closer EU ties were crucial, saying: "There is nothing more dangerous than immobility in a changing world." There have been few presidential press conferences in recent years, enabling the president to turn the briefing on Europe in the Elysée's ornate salle des fêtes into a special occasion.

His opening message was aimed at national politicians and European leaders who meet on May 2 in Brussels to confirm the 11 countries, including France, have qualified for monetary union. Mr Chirac left no doubt yesterday that he believed that

more EU involvement would strengthen France.

He asked Mr Jospin to concentrate on a programme of internal reforms including lower taxes, to make economic unity easier.

"I understand the fear that French identity, culture and language could disappear... but these fears are not justified," he said. "Thanks to Europe, we will be able to assert ourselves as a determined and modern nation."

He warned his Gaullist RPR and other rightwing MPs to stop saying closer EU ties would dilute French international influence.

In next week's vote on the euro, Gaullist and centrist Euro-sceptics could ally with Communists who plan to vote against a common currency even though they are part of the leftwing government.

Yesterday, the Communist Party leader, Robert Hue, wrote to Mr Chirac demanding a referendum. Mr Hue said monetary union would benefit only bankers and financiers, contradicting Mr Jospin's view that it would help to create jobs.

The other main anti-EU political force, the xenophobic National Front, is not represented in parliament but its leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, has said the single currency would lead to bankruptcy.

Curb on tobacco adverts hits parliamentary obstacle

Martin Walker in Brussels

THE European Union's decision to phase out tobacco advertising has "no legal basis", two committees of the European Parliament announced yesterday, setting the stage for a constitutional clash when parliament votes on the ban next month.

The tobacco lobby was delighted by the verdict of the parliament's legal affairs and economic and monetary committees, which supported its argument that the legal basis for the EU move was flawed.

The decision was taken last December by the Council of Ministers on the basis of a recommendation from the Commission to end most tobacco advertising in four years, most sponsorship in five, and all tobacco industry support for sports by 2000.

Such a council decision is usually final, but with the parliament flexing its muscles after new powers were given to it by the Amsterdam treaty, Europe could be moving into uncharted constitutional waters.

After strenuous lobbying by the tobacco lobby, and by publishers who feared that a blanket advertising ban could stifle a threatening precedent for freedom of expression, the two parliamentary committees have thrown the legal issue wide open and more lobbying from both pro- and anti-tobacco groups will follow.

Although the vote at next month's plenary session of the parliament in Strasbourg is only "advisory", according to the Commission, it could open the way for separate legal appeals by the tobacco lobby which may end up in the European Court of Justice.

John Paul tiles a bridge to the east

John Hooper in Rome

EVERY so often a lorry shudders to a halt at the gates of the Vatican, spilling powdery dust on to the unsmiling black

uniforms of the Swiss Guards. After a quick inspection, it trundles up the cobbled street which leads to the Pope's palace.

The lorry's periodic arrival is one of the few outward signs of what

could turn out to be John Paul's most enduring contribution to the millennium celebrations. It is laden with hundreds of thousands of tiny cut stones — the raw material for a project that has earned comparison with Michelangelo's decoration of the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

For the past two years a Russian mosaicist has been working in virtual secrecy in the Vatican to create one of the century's most ambitious works of art. By the time it is finished, for inauguration in 2000, the Redemptoris Mater chapel will be adorned with up to 100 million mosaic pieces.

Photographs published this week by the magazine *Oggi* show that the ceiling and one wall of a sizeable hall have already been decorated. The chapel is in the most sensitive part of the Vatican, the Apostolic Palace, which houses not only the Pope's private apartments but also the offices of his chief minister, the secretary of state.

It is therefore by no means clear whether it will be open to the public. Some

of the Vatican's finest works of art, including murals by Raphael and his pupils, are hidden from view.

The Redemptoris Mater chapel combines several of the Pope's favourite themes. It is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, to whom he is especially devoted, and takes its name from an encyclical he published in 1987.

It also reflects his wish to reunite eastern and western Europe and heal the breach between Rome and Orthodox Christianity. The artist, Aleksandr Koronkhov, is an Orthodox Christian and his work is uncompromisingly Eastern in style.

Mr Koronkhov, aged 50, said he had been recommended to the Pope by the Russian poet Olga Sedakova. "It was she who took my first sketches to Rome to put them before the Holy Father," he told *Oggi*.

His mother was also a mosaicist, though her best-known works are of a rather different kind: she was responsible for many of the depictions of triumphant socialist toll in the Moscow metro.

Returning Serbs killed by Bosnian Croat neighbours

Foreign Staff

AN elderly Serb couple were found murdered yesterday after returning to a town which suffered some of the worst ethnic cleansing of the Bosnian war.

Nato-led peacekeeping troops found their bodies after seeing the couple's house ablaze in Drvar. The couple had been shot in the back and the man also had stab wounds, the United Nations spokesman in Sarajevo, Alexander Ivanov, said.

Drvar, in western Bosnia, used to be 98 per cent Serb but virtually all of them, except for a few in mixed marriages, left when it was overrun by Croats in 1995.

Residents of Drvar, many of whom are war refugees from other parts of Bosnia, have intimidated returning Serbs.

Under international pressure the Croats have allowed some 1,500 Serbs to return, but there have been arson attacks on about 50 Serb houses in the town this year and none of the perpetrators has been found.

The elderly couple had returned to the town about 20 days ago to find their house occupied by Croat refugees. They were murdered in another house in which they had temporarily settled.

Drvar's deputy prime minister, Vojislav Seselj, warned Kosovo Albanians yesterday that if war erupts as a result of their intransigence, they could be evicted from their homes just like tens of thousands of like Serbs during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.

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Iran's power struggle

Supporters cheer released mayor

Julian Borger in Tehran

PRESIDENT Mohammad Khatami of Iran won an important tactical victory over his conservative opponents with the release from jail of Tehran's reformist mayor, but the struggle over the country's future course is far from over, analysts and politicians said yesterday.

Gholamhossein Karbaschi was greeted on his release on bail by crowds of cheering supporters on Wednesday night. Hundreds of well-wishers turned up at his house again yesterday to offer encouragement after his 11 rights in detention on embezzlement charges.

The conservative-dominated judiciary had wanted to hold the mayor for a month, the maximum allowed without charge, pending investigation of the city's finances.

The early release was ordered by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, after Mr Khatami sent him a letter on Wednesday warning that the government's confrontation with the judiciary was sapping the strength of the state.

Ayatollah Khamenei, an

arch-conservative, appealed yesterday for the internal rift to be healed. He said both the executive and judiciary deserved public support as they each shouldered "heavy tasks". Television pictures of the event showed Mr Khatami and his foes — Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, the head of the judiciary, and the parliamentary speaker, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri — sitting around

'Conservatives were claiming the mayor had committed very gross violations'

the supreme leader's chair. Ibrahim Yazdi, an opposition liberal politician, said Mr Karbaschi's release was a sign that the tide was turning in favour of the president.

"The conservatives were claiming that the mayor had committed very gross violations and now they are forced to release him," he said.

Mr Karbaschi is still due to stand trial in the next few weeks, but it has been agreed

that the government will present a dossier of evidence on the mayor's behalf. An aide to the mayor said he would not be returning to his office for the time being.

Speaking to the state news agency after his release, Mr Karbaschi denied the judiciary's allegations of corruption. "No embezzlement or misappropriation of public funds have taken place," the mayor said. But he added that mistakes could have been made.

Analysts expect the conservative clerics to renew their assault during the trial.

"This time [the reformists] are fighting for their lives, because they know if Karbaschi were to go, the next target would be Khatami," said Farida Farhi, a political commentator in Tehran.

A battle of wits has been under way inside Iran's ruling circles since President Khatami's election victory last May. He has promised to make the country's rulers more answerable to its laws and constitution.

The leading conservative clerics view his reform programme as an assault on their authority. With the detention of the mayor the struggle looked in danger of spreading to the streets.



Tehran's mayor, Gholamhossein Karbaschi, is held aloft by supporters after his release on bail. PHOTOGRAPH: JAMSHID BARFAM

Russian military die in ambush

James Meek in Moscow

A SENIOR Russian general was killed and another seriously injured in an attack on an army convoy in the north Caucasus yesterday.

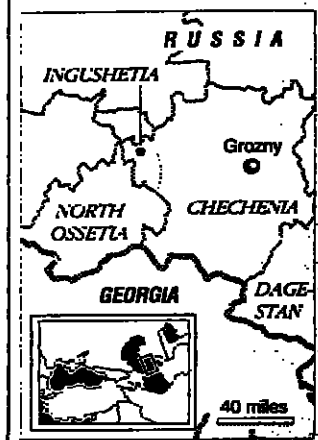
The ambush, launched near the border between the autonomous regions of north Ossetia and Ingushetia, was blamed on rogue fighters from the rebel territory of Chechnya who had refused to accept the peace treaty with Russia.

But the case of the gang's escape will increase suspicion in Moscow that Ingushetia is turning a blind eye to guerrilla activity. The previous day, 10 Russian soldiers were kidnapped by gunmen in Ingushetia in broad daylight.

Yesterday's ambush took place as a column of Russian army jeeps cut across the territory on their way between two towns in Ossetia. At least four people died and seven were injured when the vehicles came under fire from small arms and grenade launchers.

The Chechen authorities, who are trying to build stable relations with Russia, promised to help find the attackers, despite criticising Russia for assuming they were Chechens.

Chechnya is internationally recognised as part of Russia but since defeated two years ago, the Kremlin has had no control over law enforcement.



India's military dove turns to hawking the nuclear option

George Fernandes is an unlikely defence minister, writes Suzanne Goldenberg

HE SEEMS at first an unlikely man to have ordered a strategic review which will decide whether New Delhi builds a nuclear bomb, and to have boasted that Indian missiles were trained to hit "every inch" of Pakistani soil.

In a capital where politicians are so obsessed with status and self-preservation that their children are accompanied to pop concerts by bodyguards with machine guns, the defence minister, George Fernandes, walks to parliament and has given part of his ramshackle colo-

nial bungalow to exiled Burmese student leaders.

Until last month his encounters with the armed forces were largely restricted to protesting at human rights abuses by soldiers in Kashmir and the north-east, where there are long-running insurgencies, and in Sri Lanka, Tibet and Burma.

But Pakistan's announcement last week that it had successfully test-fired a missile able to reach the south Indian city of Madras has forced the former labour leader to try to modulate the pro-nuclear stance of the Hindu national-

ist Bharatiya Janata Party, which leads the coalition government.

"I do not believe our response to the test has to be reactive," he said earlier this week. "We have a programme of our own. I have consistently said from day one that we are capable of tackling the situation arising from the testing of the Chauri missile."

New Delhi sees the test as a warning to Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government to resist going nuclear and a rejoinder to India's deployment of its Prithvi missile near Jalandhar in Punjab last year. Both missiles can carry nuclear warheads.

Mr Fernandes said the defence review could recommend hardening of India's nu-

clear policy. "If the review finds that exercising the option of acquiring nuclear weapons is required then a decision will have to be taken."

The BJP has always wanted India to build the bomb, not so much for security but as the

ultimate physical embodiment of its nationalist philosophy. Although making a coalition has forced it to jettison some of its more extreme beliefs, it has been able to rally a disparate alliance of regional parties, Hindu chauvinists and old-style socialists like Mr

Fernandes behind a promise to consider introducing nuclear weapons. That has disquieted defence analysts in New Delhi and Washington.

"What is the grave threat that warrants the introduction of nuclear weapons?" asked Lieutenant-General V.R. Raghavan of the Delhi Policy Group. "Political compulsions cannot be allowed to be the engine of national security."

India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 and, to Washington's dismay, it has refused to sign the non-proliferation and the comprehensive test ban treaties, arguing they discriminate in favour of established nuclear powers.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since they won their freedom 50 years ago. India spends \$5.6 billion on defence — 2.8 per cent of its GNP. Pakistan spends \$1.7 billion — 5.2 per cent of GNP.

The state department in Washington said had been aware of Islamabad's intention to test the missile but had failed to dissuade it.

Yesterday Pakistan's prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, tried to allay Washington's fears and deflect the possibility of US sanctions.

"Why should it harm relations with the US?" he said

after meeting the visiting American envoy to the United Nations, Bill Richardson. "It is Pakistan's indigenous missile programme; it must not harm relations with anyone."

Although Mr Fernandes' attention was focused this week on Pakistan, most analysts agree that the primary threat to Indian security comes from China, a far more formidable power and the source of much of Islamabad's military technology. Chinese forces regularly stray into India across the Tibetan border.

He is also pressing for a 10 per cent increase in spending on the 1.1 million-strong army, which is heavily engaged in fighting insurgencies. The cash-strapped government is unlikely to agree.

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A death in Cambodia

Evil has its reasons

THE DEATH of Pol Pot is as obscure and perverse as his life, even now that it has been conclusively confirmed. It was only yesterday that a Khmer Rouge commander offered him — alive — to anyone who might be interested in trying him for crimes against humanity. We commented then that Pol Pot was terminally ill: a strange coincidence indeed that the final termination should have come within the day. Simple explanations remain the most obvious ones. Pol Pot was already a very sick man when his colleagues put him on display last year, moving slowly and painfully. Death by heart failure seems a plausible end. But he has certainly died at a most convenient time for all those who have no wish to see the enormous crimes committed in Cambodia — and sometimes condoned elsewhere — now disinterred.

Whether these crimes make Pol Pot — as one newspaper headline put it yesterday — “the world’s most evil man” is another matter. Even to discuss the issue runs the risk of appearing to seek to extenuate his crimes. But it does no service to the one and a half million plus who died in Cambodia — or the millions who have died at the hands of brutal regimes elsewhere — to suggest either that the Cambodian tragedy is unique in modern history or that four years of mass murder only happened because the man at the top may have been a psychopath.

Cambodia in 1975 was physically devastated, politically bankrupt, emotionally des-

perate. It was driven by all these factors, combined with ignorance, poverty, envy and fear, to provide fertile ground for extremism and ultra-left dogma. Henry Kissinger yesterday spoke of the “so-called bombing of Cambodia”, presumably as distinct from a proper bombing which would have destroyed the entire Cambodian infrastructure and traumatised the entire Cambodian people — not just a large proportion of both. That tragedy was one of the factors. The corruption of the Cambodian state, destabilised by coup d’état against the one leader (Norodom Sihanouk) capable of unifying the nation, was another. So was the fanaticism of an insurrectionist movement seeking to prove itself as more revolutionary than the Vietnamese. The dogma about rural self-reliance brought back from Paris by Pol Pot’s colleagues played its part — too many theses, not enough experience on the ground. Pol Pot himself, as historian Ben Kiernan has observed, “never worked a rice field or knew much of village life”.

These circumstances do not by themselves “explain” Pol Pot and his mass murders. But it seems obvious that people such as Pol Pot — or Hitler, Stalin, Mobutu, and other tyrants of our time — are more likely to emerge in societies suffering from multiple stress and dislocation. To say that they are not exclusively responsible, in spite of Dr Kissinger’s disclaimer, for the multiple deaths in Cambodia (or in other countries caught in the rip of the cold war tide such as Angola) is not to make excuses. It is simply to acknowledge that in a connected world even the most horrific crimes do not occur in isolation and that they will only flourish in fertile ground.

In Cambodia, the ground continued to nourish the Khmer Rouge for nearly 20 years after it was ousted because it was internationally expedient for the West to

allow it to foment rebellion on the fringes. The remnants of the movement still hope that this will continue. Yesterday a Khmer Rouge official was quoted as saying that the death should be “good for the Khmer Rouge”. He hoped that “his (Pol Pot’s) bad name will vanish with his death”. There is indeed hope for the Khmer Rouge if we are unwise enough to shift all responsibility on to the shoulders of Pol Pot — whether we call him No. 1, No. 2, or No. 3 World Monster. If his death serves any purpose, it is to deal a death blow to the movement which supported him, and to prompt us to probe more deeply into the complex sources of evil.

Bulldozer taste

Eyesore or sight for sore eyes?

BARRY Sheerman’s millennium challenge will stir subconscious impulses of creative destruction up and down the land. The Labour MP for Huddersfield wants to celebrate the millennium by razing some of Britain’s ugliest buildings to the ground and replacing them with something more appropriate to the 21st century. Among London eyesores on Mr Sheerman’s list for destruction are the usual suspects — Battersea Power Station, Millbank Tower, Centre Point and the Department of Environment building in Westminster. He also suggests Buckingham Palace. Following his request for other suggestions yesterday, James Naughtie of the Today programme offered the St James’s shopping centre, Edinburgh — and it goes without saying that the Bull Ring, Birmingham, will be on everyone’s list. So, let the bulldozers roll...

But, hang on. Who are we to say what is ugly? Where are the arbiters of taste who can speak ex cathedra? Not everyone has

the confidence of the Sultan of Oman who recently announced a ban on ugly buildings. (It seems he meant non-Arabic buildings.) What is beautiful to one person is repulsive to another. And beauty is often a function of the age. The Houses of Parliament, now revered as a Gothic revival masterpiece, were reviled at the time. Disraeli remarked that if the architect were to be hanged in public, it might put a stop to such blunders in future. The former FT building in the City, castigated when built, was later loaded with awards. Victorian buildings were regarded as ugly in the mid-century but have now been rehabilitated. The new British Library was heavily criticised while being built but is already awash with plaudits. The modernist “carbuncle” that Prince Charles prevented from being built as the extension to the National Gallery in London has enthusiasts. Mr Sheerman’s dreaded Battersea Power station is a wonderful example of industrial townscape to others and Centre Point has now been listed. Some people even nourish revisionist thoughts about the brutalist tower blocks. This is not to say that the St James building in Edinburgh or the Marsham Street monstrosity will be tomorrow’s architectural shrines, merely that we need a lot of time to be really sure. A millennium?

Let’s surf, Tony

And glimpse the others too

THE Prime Minister has done well to expand the Number 10 Internet web site inaugurated by his predecessor. Apart from lots of service information about Downing Street and its previous occupants (written with impeccable impartiality), it contains

interactive chat rooms where the public can discuss policies on economics, education and health — or start their own debates which ministers may join from time to time. If you type the words “sourd bites” in the site’s search engine, as like as not you will get some real sound bites (like a brief audio recording from a recent Robin Cook speech). One of the few qualifications is that the print is so small in places that people might have difficulty reading it.

This month’s high point will be a live question and answer session by the Prime Minister, claimed to be the first of its kind for a PM in Europe (though the Chancellor, Gordon Brown did a live session at the time of the last budget). If this turns out to be a successful experiment it could be a good place for MPs to resolve questions that don’t get answered properly during the Commons question time. Either way it is a welcome extension of the democratic process and of the opening up of Westminster.

The trouble is, like all innovations, it only whets the appetite for more. Why can’t the Prime Minister put more official government documents and civil service papers on the Internet so that open discussion can be encouraged before decisions are made? They are all paid for out of our taxes and it would cost hardly anything extra to put them on the Net since they will mainly have been prepared in electronic form anyway. There could be a regular monthly or even weekly question time for all Cabinet ministers so they can be directly answerable to the public. And why not have a live video link to Cabinet meetings giving regular still snapshots? We wouldn’t expect to be allowed to hear what was going on (well, not yet) but we might be able to distinguish between those who fight their patch in Cabinet and those who keep quiet. That would be a start.

Letters to the Editor

Of politics and prayer

LIMITING political parties’ spending would not limit political debate, as Lord McAlpine says (Times from the trough, April 16). It would focus the minds of the parties and the commentators on the content of what they say, rather than on who’s got the glitziest presentation. What could be better evidence of parties’ reliability with taxpayers’ money than the effectiveness with which they spend a fixed sum for campaigning? Patrick Wallace, London.

So, Ian MacGregor was a Solwig in Religion in American Life, slogan: “The family that prays together, stays together” (Obituaries, April 14). Shame that didn’t apply to families ripped apart in mine and steel disputes. Good to see ethics in action. David Hewitt, Alva, Clackmannanshire.

NOT only is science catching up with religion in its conclusions, as James Kennard (Letters, April 9) observed, but it seems that it is now using religion’s methods. The launch of a modern Noah’s Ark (Report, April 15) from the Kennedy Space Centre acts as a pleasant confirmation of this encouraging trend. Benjamin Elton, Manchester.

If nobody wants that trainload of napalm (Wanted: safe home for napalm train, April 16) can I have it? I’ve been trying to rid my garden of chickweed for years. David Knott, Walton-on-Thames.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear. The Country Diary is on page 14.

Vote Yes, for the sake of all our Stephens

YOU cannot imagine my sense of relief when an agreement on Northern Ireland was reached. I hope that the Unionist Party and Sinn Féin will support the agreement and encourage their supporters to vote Yes in the referendum. Meetings this coming weekend are the opportunity for them to do so.

The picture of the IRA sniper road sign which had been changed from “at work” to “job seeking” (Terror risk to peace deal, April 13) was especially poignant to me as below it was a sign pointing to Bessbrook Community Centre, near where my son, Stephen, was killed in February last year by an IRA sniper. The first soldier killed in Northern Ireland was Gunner Robert Curtis of the Royal Artillery. I hope that my son, who served in the same regiment, will be the last.

Forty-two men and boys with the name Stephen have been killed in the troubles — soldiers, policemen and civilians. Can we now find a way out together, respecting each other’s right to try to achieve

our aims politically even when they conflict?

Had the Unionists been less intransigent over decommissioning and had John Major’s government not been so dependent on their vote, I believe we could have been further down the road to a working agreement by now.

The deteriorating situation after Drumcree in 1996 caused Stephen to be in Bessbrook on that February evening when he was shot, as his regiment was not due to go there until April 1997. So I feel that not only the IRA gunman but the hardline Unionists had a part to play in his death.

If the majority of the Unionist politicians do not support this agreement in the run-up to the referendum, I believe our government should consider how much longer they can support them both financially and militarily. Huge amounts of money have been pumped into Northern Ireland through reconciliation funding, for very little result, it would seem, when these politicians hold forth.

Rita Restorick, Peterborough.

WHATEVER the doubts and difficulties, South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a genuine effort to heal a nation (Leader, April 15). There is no comparable structure for Northern Ireland and I suspect there cannot be, as the truth will be too frightening because of the possible disclosures of state involvement. We close our mind to these things at our peril and store up unresolved grievances which will erupt for many years to come.

Marcus Johns, London.

HUGO Young’s analysis (In Ireland for once, politicians have taught the cynics a lesson, April 14) of the “second guessing and triple subtextual meaning” at work in the peace deal is seriously flawed. The good and kindly light shining in Northern Ireland denotes the triumph of Enlightenment Protestantism on all sides.

Garry Adams’s hero, Wolfe Tones, was an archetypal Protestant nationalist, and every one about the Stormont peace table is a disciple of Tones’s

post-Enlightenment materialism. To the degree that they are successful, the true beneficiaries will be Sinn Féin, whose Enlightenment rationalism is now more perfectly Protestant than that of their Orange opponents.

Peter Higginson, Wolverhampton.

IRISH Americans, like Irish Britons, are entitled to have their historical antecedents and cultural ethnicity respected (Faux Irish, April 17). For a variety of reasons, be it the Irish civil war, the famine, poverty or other reasons, millions of Irish people over decades have left Ireland.

Often disenfranchised from their heritage, history, language and culture, the Irish diaspora have fought to preserve their identity against persecution and ridicule.

I am sorry that Mark Steel finds this a little cloying.

Kevin Meagher, Bolton.

IF THE hard men of the Orange Order wish to call themselves Loyalists they have to declare to whom (or to

what) they are loyal. The declarations from their leadership since last Friday show no loyalty whatsoever to the UK mainland. Indeed, we are all now “traitors”. So who are they loyal to now? Harry Butterworth, Reading.

THE paramilitaries may think it humiliating to give to their former enemies weapons they bought with good cash. But if we allow the paramilitaries to sell their weapons on the international arms market, they can salvage both their honour and their investment. Perhaps Jonathan Aitken could assist.

Robert Sather, Chesham Bois, Bucks.

PLEASE can we now ask Senator George Mitchell to go to the Middle East? Helene Neal, Nailsworth, Glos.

COULD we ask Senator Mitchell to turn his attention to Cyprus? Dr Owen Ashton, Stafford.

We do value blood donors — please don’t staunch the flow

[SHOULD like to reassure your readers that the National Blood Service, far from taking donors for granted, values them very highly (Letters, April 11).

Much has changed since Richard Timms wrote his inspirational book, *The Gift Relationship*, in 1968. The discovery of blood-borne viruses such as HIV and hepatitis B and C has made the protection of the blood supply much more complex. We are now required to ask donors a series of questions, including some about their lifestyle, which unfortunately does take time.

As to waiting times, we are investigating various ways of avoiding queues by, for instance, introducing appointments systems and extending opening hours. We are also planning to introduce a new tick-box questionnaire, which we hope will speed up the health-screening procedure.

We need 10,000 donations a day. Fortunately, we can count on the loyalty of our

existing donors, but we also want to attract new donors, who can enrol by calling 0345 711 711. They can be assured of a warm welcome.

Mike Pogden, Chairman, National Blood Service, Watford, Herts.

PRESENTLY blood and blood products are supplied to the private sector at bargain-basement “handling charges”. These are set at less than £50 per unit. And there is no proper system for checking that this charge is passed on exactly to the private sector’s patients.

A more realistic charge would be from £100 to £150 per unit, depending on its nature. An increase would be generally popular and particularly acceptable to volunteer blood donors who want our NHS to benefit from their goodwill and not profit-making hospitals and clinics.

Jim Brunton, Edinburgh.

In bad taste

[NOTE that men are to be distracted regarding their dress (Designer makeover for men, dressing badly, April 16). Who will decide what matches? Some of the most beautiful flowers are pink and exist within a framework of green foliage. Should such flowers be removed from the garden? Why are stripes and checks taboo?

Taste in art, design, food and life is a very personal thing. I am sure many men will object to being told to dress as a mirror image of a tailor’s dummy that has been dreamt up by someone with a closed mind who considers



that he or she knows what is tasteful in terms of dress.

Dr I Davies, Ballygowan, Co Down.

I WAS appalled by your blatantly sexist tone. In these days of equality and harmony

between the sexes, such an article was inappropriate and unfair. I fully expect you to redress the balance with a future piece entitled “Women can’t drive”.

Mark Redhead, London.

Jewish vote

YOUR leader (April 9) backing Gerald Kaufman’s attack on the Board of Deputies of British Jews seems ill-advised. He calls the board unrepresentative, because not all Jews belong to synagogues or organisations represented on it. I am sorry that Mark Steel finds this a little cloying.

Kevin Meagher, Bolton.

Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, B’nai B’rith — the world’s largest Jewish membership service organisation — the Jewish Association of Cultural Societies, and the Union of Jewish Students.

I wonder whether they would prefer, as you do, to support the maverick Mr Kaufman, who has not been elected to represent any of these, yet sets himself up as a superior spokesman for his co-religionists. As you say, Mr Kaufman is “hardly famed for his modesty”. Like the Guardian, he has not been shrunk from opposing Israel’s Labour governments, as well as the Netanyahu administration.

Wally Leaf, London.

Out to lunch

Bel Littlejohn

SORRY to be passed over again — for this year’s Glenfiddich Award for food-writing. Sorry not for myself, that is, but for the many countless millions who share my passionate interest in the state of food in this country. My colleagues would be the first to admit that I’ve been at the forefront of food-writing

in this country for 15 years now, ever since the publication of my first cookery-column lifestyle book, *Coping With Courgettes*, and surely it’s time my achievement was granted formal recognition.

Of course, the overnight success of *Coping With Courgettes* led to my entire *Coping With...* series, including *Coping With Cottage Cheese*, *Coping With Lasagne* and *Coping With Blauwink*. Many reviewers praised this series for being so “intensely personal”, and I took care to mix the recipes with very private anecdotes inspired by them, including details of my (then) husband’s deeply unhappy time coming to terms with bulimia.

Recently, I’ve veered more into the realms of restaurant criticism — a vital role for any real writer in these pivotal times. My *Lunching With Littlejohn* restaurant column has long been the most popu-

lar feature in *The Observer*, so much so that they last week moved its rather dull *Peace Comes To Northern Ireland* headline to the bottom of the page, replacing it with the more lively, *Bel Littlejohn: What I Thought of My Crème Brûlée*.

Like so many brilliant ideas, *Lunching With Littlejohn* is actually dead simple. I take a close friend along to review a leading restaurant in London or further afield (I once went to Croydon, can you believe it?) then I write up the meal as only someone who’s deeply concerned about food knows how.

Last week, I schlepped along to a new Italian off the Portobello Road with my good mate Janet Street-Porter. Did you read it? You should have. It was everything a good restaurant review should be: intensely personal, soul-baring, informative not just about the writer and the writer’s com-

panion but also about all the latest ups and downs in their private lives, plus plenty of pithy, up-to-the-minute observations about the zeitgeist (have you noticed how bird-watching, maroon, Glen Campbell and premium bonds are all making a comeback?) and a truly dazzling turn of phrase applied to that most important part of any restaurant review — the reviewer.

IN THE first 300 words, I told how my ex, Don, bless him (not) had run off with a former actress he met in an Italian restaurant, though this one was not in Portobello but in Fimbo. To my certain knowledge this actress had only ever been in one episode of *Casualty*, and then only as a housewife with a nosebleed, so I don’t suppose she was paying for her own meal.

Inspired by the restaurant, I let my *Observer* readers into my world, and confessed that

I was so engrossed in telling Janet about the way Don used to leave his filthy underpants around the place expecting the Little Woman to tidy up after him (charming) that frankly I failed to notice what the first course was, though it may well have been either a salad sort of thing or some kind of pasta. Whatever.

For the main body of the article, prompted by the arrival of our main course (something a little bit chickeny, or so my notes tell me) I got down to describing a disastrous meal I once had with the late Dorothy Squires, when I was attempting to persuade her to take up the post of vice-president of Women in the Media.

This in turn allowed me to wax lyrical about my life-enhancing experience singing old Moody Blues numbers on a beach in Morocco with Jack Straw some time in the late 1970s. Great days indeed —

and where better to write about them than a restaurant column?

Instead of going on about the sweet, I described Janet’s brilliant new Stella McCartney trouser-suit in lilacs and deep, deep browns, and her plans — already in development — for a series of TV walks with Chris Evans around historic Lake Como.

I ended the piece by saying that after a couple of coffees, which tasted pretty much like (note subs — name to follow) and moored around Portobello market for 20 minutes, picking up some great bargains.

Re-reading this week’s restaurant piece, I was knocked back by just how giving they are compared to so many others who just write in laborious detail about — yawn! — the restaurant they’re visiting.

Memo to the 1999 Glenfiddich jury: get a life.

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Pol Pot

Ruler of the chasm of darkness

Sir Ronald Millar

Figure 1: A schematic diagram of a 1D lattice chain. It shows a horizontal line with several vertical tick marks representing lattice sites. Above the line, there are labels for different sites: '1', '2', '3', '4', '5', '6', '7', '8', '9', '10', '11', '12', '13', '14', '15', '16', '17', '18', '19', '20'. Below the line, there are labels for different sites: '1', '2', '3', '4', '5', '6', '7', '8', '9', '10', '11', '12', '13', '14', '15', '16', '17', '18', '19', '20'. The diagram illustrates the arrangement of sites and the movement of particles (represented by dots) between them.

Birthdays

ary 1923, died April 15, 1998

Sir Ronald Millar

Putting words in Thatcher's mouth

work as bridge designer, was
in *Antigone* and in the 1939
Footlights revue with the

Conservative seat, later reflecting in his memoirs, *A View From the Wings: West*

Miller arrived back to write plays such as *The Bride and the Bachelor* at the very time

Their rapport was sealed when Millard wrote a short speech for her from his seat

Ronald Miller, playwright and political speechwriter, born November 12, 1919, died April 16, 1998

tor, Ian Mayes, on 0171 239 9589, 11am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 239 9697. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

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104

11-10

...and the

Figure 1. Aerial view of the study area. The area is divided into three main sections: the northern section (top), the central section (middle), and the southern section (bottom). The northern section is characterized by a large, irregularly shaped area of dense vegetation. The central section is a large, rectangular area of open land, possibly a field or a cleared area. The southern section is a smaller, irregularly shaped area of dense vegetation. The area is surrounded by a network of roads and paths, and a few small buildings are visible in the central section.

Industry begs for halt to interest rate rises as more firms take a battering from high pound

Sterling woe spreading to services

Charlotte Denny

INDUSTRY leaders yesterday begged the Bank of England to call a halt to interest rate rises as new evidence showed that the pain caused by the strong pound has spread from manufacturing into the services sector.

Export sales and orders for UK firms have slumped to a seven-year low, according to the latest quarterly economic survey from the British Chambers of Commerce.

Manufacturers are suffering export losses, while the services sector, which has until now shown little signs of slowing down, recorded its lowest positive ratio for six years of firms expecting export growth.

BCC deputy director Dr Ian Peters said the results showed the economy was clearly slowing down and exporters were taking a "real battering."

"There is no justification

for further interest rate rises," he said. "The Bank of England must now display a unified front and make it clear that interest rates have peaked."

"Failure to do so, or a decision to raise interest rates further, may be all that is needed to tip the manufacturing sector into recession."

For the second month in a row, according to the minutes of the meeting, the Bank's monetary policy committee was split down the middle in March over whether to raise rates, with the governor, Edie George, using his casting vote to spare businesses and homeowners another increase in the cost of borrowing.

"Exporters in both manufacturing and services are now taking a real battering," said Dr Peters. "Cheap imports are adding to the pressure on manufacturers at home, with clear signs of a knock-on effect on the service sector."

According to the BCC,

smaller companies are feeling the sharpest pinch from sterling's strength, with medium-sized manufacturing firms expecting a squeeze on profits.

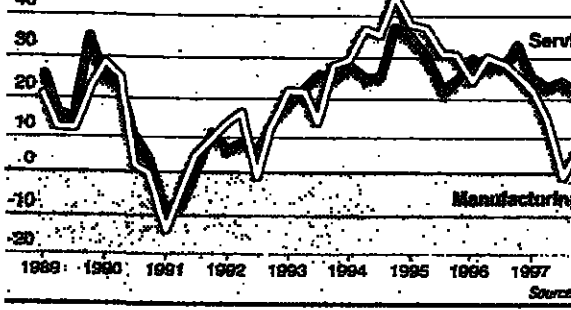
Slower growth at home brought manufacturers' confidence levels down to their lowest for five years. They expect to take on fewer staff. Companies in the service sector are still expecting employment to increase.

Michael Dicks, UK economist at Lehman Brothers, said the survey pointed to weaker than expected growth in the first three months of the year. "Next week's GDP report might not be so upbeat after all," he said. "We had assumed, before today's numbers, that it would show real GDP growth of 0.7 per cent, quarter-on-quarter — faster than in the fourth quarter of last year. Now, however, we will look for 0.6 per cent — the same as in that quarter."

David Hillier, from Barclays Capital, said the survey showed companies in the service sector expected things to

Getting tougher for exporters

Export sales, percentage balance reporting sales increase



get worse. The survey suggested inflationary pressures were subdued and that rates had peaked, he said.

But Richard Iley from ABN Amro said: "There is little to suggest that the above-trend growth services have enjoyed over the past 18 months has come to an end." The balance of firms reporting increased domestic sales pointed to ex-

Numbers game adds to experts' disagreement

BANK of England experts who decide the cost of borrowing pay careful attention to surveys like the one released yesterday by the British Chambers of Commerce, writes Charlotte Denny.

When the economy is at a turning point — at the top or bottom of a business cycle — surveys are often more up to date than official figures, partly because they take less time to compile. Surveys such as those produced by the BCC or the CBI can be a month ahead.

Recent manufacturing survey results have puzzled

the policy-makers. While the official figures pointed to a contraction in the sector at the end of last year, the BCC and CBI surveys suggested strong domestic orders were making up for the weakness in exports.

Hence the significance of yesterday's survey, which also showed a drop in home sales.

The Bank's monetary policy committee pored over the contradiction between the survey data and the official figures at its March meeting. The minutes published on Wednesday showed that hawks and

doves favoured the figures that supported their respective cases.

The hawks claimed the surveys were more reliable and the Office for National Statistics' first guess at manufacturing output should be regarded warily, because it was generally revised upwards. The doves said surveys did not track the revised official figures well, and recent revisions were downwards rather than upwards.

The BCC survey also offers policy-makers a snapshot of the services sector — a much larger chunk of the economy than manufacturing. Here, official data are less comprehensive even though they cover nearly two-thirds of economic output.

But yesterday's figures suggest that growth will have been lower than expected in first three months of the year. This will be further ammunition for the doves.

Prize catch



Casting wide... Keen to hook anglers such as Prince Charles and Billy Connolly (below right), the House of Hardy plans a chain of Farlow's stores across Britain

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GOODWIN

Reel deal lands big fish by netting royal supplier

TONY MAY on the merger of two upmarket fishing stores

FARLOW's and the House of Hardy, the shops where Prince Charles buys his fishing rods and probably his waders, too, are to merge.

Last year, Gerry Metcalfe was called in to revive the fortunes of House of Hardy, the 125-year-old maker of exclusive fishing rods whose flagship store in Pall Mall attracts pop royalty such as

Eric Clapton, Roger Daltry and Billy Connolly as well as King Hussein of Jordan.

Yesterday, Metcalfe, now managing director of House of Hardy, took over the 158-year-old Farlow's of Pall Mall, the nearest rival, run by Alister Baxter who is joining the management team.

The next step then, he says, will be a chain of Farlow's

shops across the shires and Europe. A move downstream, with a separate chain of shops for the small army of coarse anglers now served by an array of sole traders, should follow. He is hoping to attract the business of Britain's 4 million fishing enthusiasts.

The ex-Banham manager knows a thing or two about the trade. He took up fly-fishing for salmon as a way of

learning the business and within months had expanded the company with the acquisition of Perthshire Field Sports, one of Scotland's top fishing tackle and country clothing retailers.

By 2002, he wants turnover to be between £12 million and £15 million, through franchising the brands.

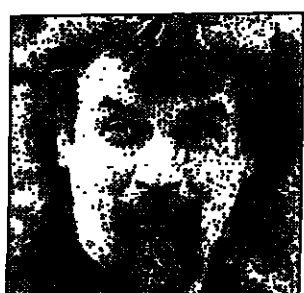
Like House of Hardy, Farlow's holds a Royal Warrant from Prince Charles. But while Hardy sells only its own crafted rods and reels, Farlow's offers a full range of competing brands. Metcalfe says fly-fishers are among the top 10 per cent of the fishing world in annual spending, and his group caters for the pinnacle of that market.

It costs about £1,000 to kit out for fly-fishing, and a prime spot on a top salmon river for a few days at the



right time of year would take that outlay to about £5,500. But serious anglers could spend about £15,000 a year on the sport.

Metcalfe has already raised turnover at Hardy's — which supplies 50 countries and sells through 300 accounts in the US alone — from £3 million to £5.5 million, while Farlow's 100,000 customers spend



£3 million a year. The tone of the operation is relentlessly upmarket. Farlow's has taken over sponsorship of an international flyfishing competition from Benson & Hedges. And, no lugworm-by-post mail-order book, its ritzy magazine is quality bait reaching 400,000 coffee tables worldwide and designed to please the Tatler readership.

£832,000 for a month's work

Ian King

JOHN Jackson, former deputy chairman of the conglomerate Hillsdown Holdings, was paid £832,000 in 1997 — even though he was in office for only one month of the year.

According to the food, furniture and house-building company's annual report, Mr Jackson, who left Hillsdown at the end of January last year, received a pay-off of £792,000 as compensation for his loss of office.

He was also paid £25,000 for his month's work and received benefits in kind valued at £15,000.

At the time of his departure, Hillsdown described the move as amicable and by mutual agreement, adding that Mr Jackson would be awarded a year's salary as compensation for his loss of office.

According to the report, the golden handshake comprises a compensation payment of £459,000, along with a contribution of £333,000 to Mr Jackson's pension scheme.

News of the pay-off is certain to outrage long-suffering shareholders in Hillsdown, which recently announced a fall in full-year pre-tax profits — including one-off items — from £129 million to £110 million.

At the time of that announcement, Sir John Nott, the former Conservative minister who chairs Hillsdown, said that the company would take action to improve its dismal return to shareholders, and promised to consider a "full range of options".

Sir John is expected to outline what action the board will take at next month's annual meeting, and speculation is rife in the City that Hillsdown could break itself up, or at least demerge its house-building business, Fairview Homes.

Mr Jackson, aged 48, had been with Hillsdown for 20 years — including eight as deputy chairman — and at the time of his departure was the company's second-biggest individual shareholder, after Sir Harry Solomon, Hillsdown's founder.

No one from Hillsdown was available last night to discuss the matter.

© Sir Christopher Lewinton, chairman of the engineering group TI, received a 2 per cent pay increase last year, taking his earnings to £1.16 million, according to the company's annual report.

William Laule, chief executive of TI — which was relegated from the FTSE 100 index during the period — saw his salary rise from £396,000 to £500,000.

News in brief

James Keen

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 1996, we published an article under the headline "Rogue trader cost UBS £500,000" which reported the outcome of the disciplinary proceedings brought by the Securities and Futures Authority against UBS and two of its traders, one of whom was James Keen. The SFA never suggested that Mr Keen deliberately concealed losses or that he acted dishonestly. We regret our report suggested otherwise and we have apologised to Mr Keen and paid his legal costs and appropriate damages.

Microsoft bug-infested

MICROSOFT admitted last night for the first time that two dozen of its products have problems with the "millennium bug", including the Windows 95 and Windows NT operating systems. Although it characterised most problems as "minor issues", Microsoft said three older software programs had serious flaws.

The Windows operating system, which runs on about 90 per cent of all personal computers, is generally "year 2000 compliant", Jason Matusow, manager of Microsoft's year 2000 compliance programme, said. Windows 95, the upgrade due out on June 25, fully meets year 2000 requirements, while Windows 98 and Windows NT are compliant except for minor issues. Microsoft is in the process of testing its older Windows 3.1 version. — AP

Cendant's NCP hopes dented

A SHADOW was cast across the \$201 million takeover of National Car Parks yesterday when nearly \$9 billion was wiped off the market value of Cendant, the bidder. The US company's shares fell as much as 33 per cent after Cendant said it was restating its earnings because of accounting irregularities discovered at an offshoot of CUC International, a company it acquired in December for \$8 billion.

The NCP deal should not be affected because it is for cash and both parties are determined to push the deal through. But the stock market collapse has shaken confidence in Cendant's top management. — Tony May

Welsh coal co-op mooted

A PROPOSAL to set up a government-sponsored co-operative to market and distribute Welsh coal has been welcomed by Welsh Office industry minister Peter Hain. The suggestion, made in a report by the Cardiff Business School in co-operation with the Welsh Office, would represent a first tentative step away from the private ownership and control of the mining industry enforced by the Conservative government at the end of 1994.

The establishment of Welsh Coal Limited, with the support of the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency, is one of a string of interventionist proposals arising out of a conference organised by Mr Hain last December to bolster the rump of an industry which once employed 270,000 workers. — Seamus Milne

Safeway reshuffles card

SAFeway, the struggling supermarket chain, has launched a customer loyalty initiative which gives high-spending shoppers the opportunity to earn big rewards. The company introduced its loyalty card in 1995 and the changes announced yesterday mean that anyone spending £180 or more a month will earn double points on all their shopping the following month. Those who spend £240-plus will receive triple points. — Rupert Jones

Africa's poverty trap gapes as lending slumps

World Bank report optimistic but not for sub-Saharan region

Mark Tran in Washington

IF YOU thought that an Asian tiger enjoyed the world's fastest-growing economy in the past three decades, you would be wrong. Botswana's per capita income grew 9.2 per cent between 1995 and 1996, compared with 7.3 per cent for the second-fastest performer, South Korea. China was third achieving 6.7 per cent.

Botswana's performance — a strong one and much to do with the diamond trade — is

one among the many featured in the report, World Development Indicators 1998, released by the World Bank yesterday.

In its second year now, the 389-page report gives comprehensive data on the state of the world's economic and social health. It shows how well the world is meeting six key development goals: the reduction of the extreme poverty rate by half, universal primary education, the end to gender disparities in education, the cutting of infant and child mortality by two-thirds and of maternal mortality by

three-quarters, access to reproductive health, and the reversal of environmental damage.

"There is a common perception that there is no good news to report on development," said World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz. "But the WDI is full of data to the contrary. Living standards have risen over the past 25 years. Since 1970, life expectancy has risen four months every year, infant mortality has been cut nearly in half, food production has outpaced population growth of nearly 2 billion, and 70 per cent of adults in the developing world can read today."

The report gives an upbeat picture for the developing

countries. The World Bank predicts that their growth will continue until the end of the century, rebounding from the temporary setback of the Asian financial crisis. Developing countries, excluding those in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, have generally seen their gross domestic product rise by more than 5 per cent. In South Asia, potentially the next region poised for economic take-off, the economy has grown by more than 6 per cent.

But sub-Saharan Africa is not expected to meet growth targets to reduce poverty by half by 2015. The region needs to grow 1.9 per cent annually, but suffered negative growth of 1.5 per cent from 1991 to

1995, and is projected to grow only 1.1 per cent in 1997-2000.

The World Bank survey shows that military spending has shrunk considerably since the end of the cold war. For the world as a whole, arms expenditure dropped from 2.2 per cent of GDP to 2.8 per cent between 1985 and 1995. In some countries the decline was dramatic. In Vietnam, for example, military expenditure fell from 19.4 per cent to 2.6 per cent. In Syria, spending fell from 21.8 per cent to 7.2 per cent.

While universal primary education is a key World Bank goal, the institution yesterday came under fire from the charity Oxfam for now devoting fewer resources from

its soft loan arm, the International Development Association, to basic social services such as education, and health and nutrition.

The Bank made a commitment to sharply increase lending for social sectors to about \$15 billion (£8.9 billion) over the next three years, yet its lending figures for 1997 show that overall lending for these sectors has plummeted — from roughly \$4 billion in 1996 to just \$1.2 billion in 1997.

The Bank says that as lending takes place over a three-year cycle, there will be fluctuations. Oxfam, however, argues that, despite the rhetoric, the drop reflects the lack of political clout needed for basic social programmes.

